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THE
SECRET OF THE SANDS;

OR,

THE "WATER-LILY" AND HER CREW.

A NAUTICAL NOVEL.

BY
HARRY COLLINGWOOD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.



GRIFFITH AND FARRAN,
CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, LONDON.

1879.

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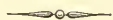
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THE SECRET OF THE SANDS.



CHAPTER I.

THE WRECK OF THE COPERNICUS.

AT eight o'clock next morning, nothing having occurred during the night worthy of record, we went about and stood away about north-east on the starboard tack. The wind continued fresh, but steady, and we averaged quite thirteen knots during the whole of the next twenty-four hours.

Having carried out our plan for eluding the brig, and being by this time well to windward of the spot where we parted company with her, I considered we might now with safety bear away upon our course, which we accordingly did directly after breakfast, setting our balloon gaff-

topsail once more, and getting the spinnaker to the bowsprit-end again.

This additional canvas had the effect of increasing our speed to fully sixteen knots; and the alteration of our course produced a corresponding and very agreeable change in the motion of the yacht; the quick jerky plunge of a vessel digging into a head sea being exchanged for a long easy swinging roll, which was far more conducive to comfort, especially as we now enjoyed the added luxury of a dry deck.

Three days passed utterly devoid of incident, except that the wind gradually hauled far enough aft to enable us to shift our spinnaker from the bowsprit-end to the starboard side; and once more we were flying along upon our course with the wind nearly dead fair, and every stitch of canvas spread that we had the means of packing upon the little craft.

With our low hull, we must have presented the appearance of a snow-white pyramid, gliding, unsupported, over the surface of the ocean. On the morning of the fourth day, as I came upon

deck at seven bells to relieve Bob, whilst he looked after breakfast, the old fellow said, "Here, Harry, your eyes are younger than mine; what d'ye make this out to be away here broad upon our starboard bow?"

I looked in the direction indicated, and saw what appeared to be the stumps of three spars just showing above the horizon. I took the glass, and went aloft as far as the crosstrees, and from that "coign of 'vantage" made out that they were the lower-masts of a full-rigged ship of considerable size; for I could see the three lower yards with long streamers of canvas fluttering from them.

The topmasts were carried away close to the caps and hung over the side, with topgallant-masts, yards, sails, etc., still attached, a great tangled mass of wreck. There was no signal of distress flying on board so far as I could see, so I concluded that the vessel was derelict; but as it would not take us very much out of our way, and as we were in no great hurry, I resolved to haul up and take a nearer look at her.

Accordingly, having advised Bob of what I had seen and of my intention, we took in the spinaker and gaff-topsail, lowered the topmast, and then hauled up for the stranger.

An hour afterwards we were near enough to make out that she was a most beautiful craft of about eighteen hundred tons register, with very little the matter with her apparently, except that she had been dismasted, doubtless in some sudden squall.

We saw but one boat at her davits, and that was the one at her starboard quarter, which had been smashed completely in two by the wreck of the mizzen-topmast in its fall ; we therefore concluded that the crew, seized by an unaccountable panic, had left her.

We were within a quarter of a mile of the vessel, when a solitary figure, that of a female, appeared upon her lofty poop. She no sooner saw us approaching than she waved her handkerchief to us vehemently, to which we responded by waving our hats ; when, seeing that her signal had been observed, she sank down

upon the lid of the skylight, and seemed to give way to a violent flood of tears.

“Why, —— me if it don’t look as if the mean cowardly crew have been and desarted the poor thing,” exclaimed Bob with unusual vehemence, as we noticed that the figure never moved as though to direct the attention of others to our approach.

“It looks very like it,” I replied; “but we shall soon see. It will be an awkward matter to board, however, with all that wreck dangling about to leeward. Stand by to ease the jib-sheet up, as I put the helm down.”

Another minute, and we were hove to on the ship’s lee quarter, as near as we dared approach.

The young girl (for such we now saw her to be) had by this time so far recovered her composure as to rise up once more and approach the lee side of the deck.

Taking off my hat, and making my best bow, I hailed :

“Are you all alone on board there?”

“Yes, oh yes,” she replied, in the sweetest voice

I had ever heard ; “ I have been quite alone for more than a week. Pray, pray do not go away and leave me again, sir. I have been nearly mad, and I shall die if I remain alone here much longer.”

“ Make your mind quite easy, my dear young lady,” I replied ; “ we certainly will not leave you, come what may. But it will be very difficult for us to get on board, with those spars swaying about ; and the attempt to do so may occupy much time. But do not suffer the slightest apprehension ; we will get you off the wreck somehow, never fear. After all,” I remarked, half to her and half to Bob, “ I believe the quickest way out of the difficulty will be for me to jump overboard and swim alongside ; there are plenty of ropes-ends hanging over the side to help me on board.”

“ Oh no, sir !” she exclaimed eagerly ; “ indeed you must do nothing of the kind. There is an immense shark down there,” pointing under the counter ; “ he has scarcely left the ship a moment since the sailors went away.”

This was awkward. There seemed no chance of being able to get on board to leeward, the

whole of the ship's starboard side being completely encumbered with wreck; and there was far too much sea to permit of our running alongside to windward.

I took a careful glance at the gear aloft, and then made up my mind what to do.

The ship's fore-yard was lying nearly square, the yard-arms projecting several feet beyond the ship's sides, and I decided to board, by means of the fore-brace, to windward.

I hailed the young girl, telling her what to do to assist me, and then set about making preparations for leaving the *Water Lily* in Bob's sole charge for a while.

We took a double reef in the mainsail, and took the jib in altogether, running in the jib-boom also. This placed the craft under handy canvas for one man to work, and, at the same time, prevented the possibility of the jib-boom being carried away. We also got our cork-fenders upon deck, in case of unavoidably dropping alongside, and were then ready to make the proposed experiment.

The young girl had, meantime, made the lee

fore-brace fast, and had then gone over to windward and cast off the running part of the weather-brace, which she threw overboard.

I now hailed again, telling her what we were about to do, and then signed to Bob to put the helm up.

The cutter fell off until she was dead before the wind, when we gibed her and hauled again to the wind on the starboard tack, so as to cross the ship's stern at a sufficient distance to insure the success of our contemplated manœuvre.

Bob was a splendid helmsman, or I should have hesitated about attempting the feat we were now going to put in practice, as the slightest nervousness or want of tact on his part would have resulted in very serious damage to the *Lily*, if it did not actually cause her total destruction. But I had full confidence in his skill ; and, moreover, was there not a woman to be rescued from a position which might at any moment become one of the most imminent peril, even if it were not so already ?

So, as soon as we were far enough to windward, I signed to Bob to put down the helm, and round

the little craft came like a top, and away we flew down towards the ship's weather-side, going well free, but with the sheets flattened in, all ready to luff and claw off to windward the moment I had got hold of the brace.

Down we swept direct for the ship's weather-quarter, the fair girl standing again upon the poop and watching our motions with the most overwhelming anxiety.

At exactly the right instant, Bob eased his helm gently down, and the cutter shot along the ship's lofty side within ten feet of it. I stood just forward of the rigging, ready to seize the brace the moment it came within reach, and in another instant I had it.

Shouting to Bob to luff, I swung myself off into the air, and made the best of my way aloft hand over hand.

It had been my original intention to ascend to the yard-arm, and, laying in from thence, descend the fore-rigging to the deck ; but, pausing for a moment, in my anxiety to see whether Bob would scrape clear—which he very cleverly did, having kept good way on the boat—I found that, aided

by the roll of the vessel, I might easily swing myself in upon her rail.

This I soon managed, landing upon the deck to find myself confronted by the most lovely little creature you can imagine, who extended both her hands impulsively to me as she exclaimed :

“Oh, welcome, sir, welcome ! and a thousand thousand thanks for coming to my help ! and at such danger too ! How can I ever repay you ?”

“I am more than repaid already,” replied I, “for the very slight trouble I have taken, by the happiness of finding it in my power to rescue you from your present situation. The first thing to be done,” I continued, “is to provide for the safety of my little craft, after which we shall have ample time, I hope, to make suitable arrangements for transferring you on board her. Ah ! a lucky thought,” continued I, as I saw the sounding-rod and line attached to the fife-rail, “let us see what water the craft has in her.”

I sounded, and found there was barely two feet of water in the hold, so it was evident

that the vessel was perfectly tight and seaworthy, except as to the damage aloft.

Bob had by this time passed ahead and to leeward, and was now approaching on our lee quarter once more. I waited until he was within hail, and then told him to heave-to well clear of the ship, as I proposed to cut adrift all the wreck, a task which I thought I could manage without very much difficulty, and which when done would enable the *Water Lily* to come alongside to leeward.

He waved his hand in reply, and the fore-sheet being already to windward, he left the cutter to take care of herself, while he seated himself composedly in a deck-chair to smoke his pipe and watch my proceedings.

I soon found a tomahawk, and, armed with this, I went up the mizzen-rigging, intending to work my way forward. It was hard work single-handed; but by noon I had succeeded in clearing the whole mass away, and the ship soon drifted free of it, leaving her upper spars a confused floating mass upon the water.

As soon as this was done, I got an eight-

inch hawser off the top of the house forward, and managed with considerable labour to get it coiled down afresh upon the poop. I then bent on a heaving-line to one end of the hawser, which, by this means, I got to the cutter, when we moored her securely astern of the ship.

Bob then came on board up a rope which I had lashed to the mizzen boom-end for his accommodation; and we found time to look around us.

As soon as our fair hostess saw me fairly at work upon the wreck aloft, she had betaken herself to the galley; and I saw her from time to time, during the intervals of my labour, busying herself in sundry culinary operations; and she now came upon the poop where Bob and I were standing, and announced that dinner was ready, adding, "And I am sure you must stand in need of it after your hard morning's work."

I thanked her and said, "But before we go below, permit me to introduce myself. My name," raising my hat and bowing, "is Henry

Collingwood, and I am the owner of the small craft now hanging on astern. This," indicating Bob, who took off his hat and made a most elaborate "scrape," "is my friend and well-tried shipmate, Robert Trunnion, who, with myself, will do all we can to make you comfortable on board the cutter, and will stand by you to the death if need be, until we have placed you in perfect safety."

The fair girl seemed much affected by my speech, but bowing most gracefully in return, she said, "And my name is Ella Brand. I have been left alone in this ship by what I cannot but believe was a dreadful mistake, and I accept your hospitality and help as frankly as you have offered it. And now, gentlemen, that we are properly introduced," with a gay laugh, "permit me to conduct you to the cabin. Come, pussy."

This last invitation was bestowed upon a pretty little playful kitten which had been following the girl about the ship all the morning.

When we entered the cabin which, as is the

case in most large ships, was on deck, we found a most sumptuous meal prepared. Whatever other dangers the little fairy might have been exposed to, it was quite evident that Miss Brand had been in no immediate danger of starving.

Like a sensible girl she had obtained access to the ship's stores, and was evidently well acquainted with the most approved methods of preparing food for human consumption. The meal was a thoroughly pleasant one, for we were all happy; she, that assistance had come to her, and we, that it had been our good fortune to bestow it.

Whilst sitting at table the sweet little creature gave us her history, and recounted the circumstances which had placed her in her present position; but as there was nothing very remarkable in either, I shall give both in a condensed form, as I have a most wholesome dread of wearying my readers.

She told us that she was an only child, and that for the last ten years she had been a resident in Canton, whither her father had proceeded to

take possession of a lucrative appointment. After a residence of five years there, her mother died; and her father, who was passionately attached to his wife, seemed never to have recovered from the blow.

Five years more passed away, and the husband followed his fondly-loved companion, dying (so Ella asserted sobbingly) of no disease in particular, but of a gradual wasting away, the result, as she believed, of a slowly breaking heart.

She thus found herself left alone and almost friendless in a strange land, and, after taking counsel with such friends as her father had made, she had, with their assistance, disposed of everything, and had taken passage in the *Copernicus* to London, in the faint hope of being able to find some friends of her mother's of whom she had heard, but had never seen, her mother having contracted what is termed a *mésalliance*—in other words, a love-match with one whom her friends chose to consider infinitely beneath her in social position.

The ship was bound home by way of Cape Horn, having to call at the Sandwich Islands and Buenos Ayres on her way; and all had gone well

until eight days before, when, it appeared, the ship was struck by a sudden squall some time during the night, thrown on her beam-ends, and dismasted; and as Ella had remained, during the whole time, cowering and terrified in her berth, she supposed the crew had gone away in the boats, forgetting her in their hurry and panic.

As soon as the squall was over, the ship had gradually righted again; and when she went on deck next morning, she found everything in a state of wreck and confusion, and herself, and her pet kitten, and a few fowls in the coops, the only living things on board.

Her story ended, Bob and I expressed our sympathy for her friendless condition, and repeated our protestations of devotion, for both of which we were thanked anew, so sweetly that we could have gone on making promises for the rest of the day with the prospect of such a reward at the end of it.

I am not good at personal description, so I shall not attempt elaborately to describe Ella Brand.

Imagine a *petite demoiselle* of seventeen years of age, of almost fairy-like proportions, faultlessly

formed, with most lovely features, and a delicate little exquisitely poised head, crowned with a luxuriance of rich chestnut hair, which, apparently defying all its owner's efforts to control, flowed in a profusion of soft sheeny waves over her beautiful shoulders and down to her taper waist.

Her eyes were clear hazel, large and soft as those of a gazelle; her lips full and beautifully curved; and the expression of her sweet face confiding as that of a child; while her manner was a most fascinating combination of the innocent frankness of childhood with the more subtle and graceful refinement of a modest and educated woman.

Her temper, as we soon found, was perfect; and she was gifted with a genial flow of spirits, which not only made their owner light-hearted and happy, but conferred happiness upon all who had the good fortune to be thrown in her society.

Dinner ended, Bob and I adjourned to the deck to make preparations for transferring our fair young guest to the *Water Lily*, so as to be fairly away from the wreck again before nightfall.

As soon as we were out of the cabin, Bob observed :

“ I call the falling in with this here *wrack* ” (so he pronounced the word) “ downright providential, Harry. Here we has, fust of all, the very great pleasure of being of sarvice to a most charming young ’oman ; and next, we has a chance of filling up our stores and water—and not afore ’twas time, too, for I bethought me this morning of seeing how our tank stood, and I’m blest if we ain’t a’most at our last drop. It’s lucky there’s plenty of it aboard here. I sees more water-casks about the deck than will supply all as we wants ; and I think our first job had better be to get the hose and pump under weigh, and fill up our water ; a’ter which we can soon strike a few odds and ends into the cutter such as’ll be useful, and then the sooner we’re off the better.”

We set to work with a will ; and Ella coming on deck at the moment, I requested her to pack her boxes in readiness for sending them over the side, asking her, at the same time, whether it would take her long.

She replied briskly, Oh, no ; she had brought

hardly anything with her—only three large boxes and one small one.

Only! A chest apiece held Bob's and my own stock of clothing, and we considered ourselves opulently supplied; and here was a young girl who had brought hardly anything with her—only such few trifles as she could stow away in three large boxes and one small one. The three large boxes, by the way, turned out to be considerably larger than either of our sea-chests, and the small one would have sufficed for a seaman on a three years' voyage.

We did not hesitate about helping ourselves freely to the best the ship afforded, judging that it was highly improbable she would ever reach a port, unless fallen in with and taken possession of by an exceptionally strong-handed vessel (and even then our petty appropriations would never be missed); and we laid in a liberal stock of dainties of various kinds, for the especial benefit of our lady passenger, which we should never have dreamed of taking on our own account. We also transferred one coop, with as many fowls as it would conveniently accommodate, to the cutter;

and I made free with a very handsome swinging-cot which I found in the captain's cabin, also for our passenger's use, together with a good stock of bedding.

All these we collected together on the lee-side of the deck ; and when everything was ready, we got the cutter alongside, and, with considerable difficulty, got them over the side and down on her deck.

Bob went on board the *Water Lily* to receive them and stow them away as I lowered them down, and at length all was ready, and it only remained to get Ella herself on board and shove off.

We had less difficulty with her than I expected. She was rather nervous ; but, nevertheless, she seated herself courageously with her beloved kitten in her lap, in the bo'sun's chair I had rigged for her accommodation, and held on tight, shutting her eyes as she swung off the ship's bulwarks, until she felt Bob's brawny arms receive her on the deck of the cutter.

I then quickly followed ; the fasts were cast

off, and we wore round and stood away once more upon our course just as the sun dipped below the horizon.

Our first task was to crowd all the canvas we could muster upon the yacht, to make up for the day's delay; and when Ella came up from the cabin, whither she had gone upon an exploring expedition, she expressed the greatest surprise and a little alarm at the change we had wrought in the *Water Lily's* appearance.

She could not understand, she said, how so small a vessel could support such a towering spread of canvas as she now saw courting the fresh evening breeze.

The presence of our fair guest on board made certain alterations necessary in the internal arrangements of the cutter, and I left Bob at the helm in animated conversation with Ella, whilst I went below to effect them. Our cooking-stove was shifted aft, and the whole of the fore-compartment was thus left free for the accommodation of the young lady; and I at once

converted it into a sleeping apartment for her by swinging her cot there.

I selected this part of the vessel for this purpose, as it was the only one in which she would be entirely uninterrupted by our passage to and fro; and it was a nice light and *roomy* apartment, in proportion to the size of the vessel, there being nothing in it, and having a large circular plate of very thick roughened plate-glass let into the deck above.

Having made the place as comfortable as our resources permitted, I returned to the deck and relieved Bob at the tiller, desiring him to look after the arrangements for tea.

Our guest was sitting close by in one of our deck-chairs, which Bob had gallantly offered her, and hearing me speak of tea, and understanding that friend Robert was about to turn cook, she started up with child-like impetuosity and said, "That is *my* work now; come along, Mr. Trunnion, and show me your pantry, and where you keep all your things, and I will soon have your tea ready for you."

I protested against this, as did Bob, both of

us declaring that we could not possibly consent to her being troubled with the cooking or anything else ; but she drew herself up in a pretty wilful way and said, " Not let me do the cooking ? Indeed, but you must ; I insist on it. Why it is woman's peculiar province to attend to the cooking always. Men never understand how to cook properly ; they have neither tact nor patience for it. They dress food, but women cook it ; and I will soon prove to you how great a difference there is between the two. Now you must let me have my own way just this once, please," turning coaxingly to me, as she saw that I was about to make a further protest, and then, when I had reluctantly consented, she turned to Bob, and said, " Come along, Bob—Mr. Trunnion, I mean ; I really beg your pardon—you shall help me this time, and afterwards I shall know exactly where to find everything," and the strangely-contrasted pair dived below, Bob grinning from ear to ear with delight at his novel situation.

"Reminds me of little ' sauce-box ' " (my sister),

"this do," he murmured gleefully, as he followed his fair companion below.

In rather over half an hour I was invited into the cabin to the evening meal, Bob taking my place at the tiller meanwhile; and when I descended I found that a change had indeed taken place in the aspect of culinary affairs.

A snow-white table-cloth was spread, having been routed out from the deepest recesses of my chest, where it, in company with others, had lain in undisturbed repose since the commencement of the voyage, and upon it was spread a variety of dainties of various kinds, the produce of our raid upon the *Copernicus's* provision lockers; and, of all things in the world, a plentiful supply of delicious little cakes, smoking hot, which Miss Ella's own dainty hands had prepared.

The tea too, instead of being boiled in the kettle as was our usual practice, had been prepared in accordance with the most approved rules, and was certainly a very different beverage from what we had been in the habit of drinking; and, altogether, the meal was a per-

fect Epicurean feast compared with what we were accustomed to.

Ella presided, doing the honours of the small table with the grace of a princess, and I began to feel as though I had suddenly become an inhabitant of fairy-land.

As soon as my meal was over I relieved Bob, and he went below for his share of the good things; and though Miss Ella had been very demure with me, I soon discovered, by the peals of musical laughter which, mingled with Bob's gruffer cachinnations, floated up through the companion, that the two had completely broken the ice between them.

As soon as the remains of the meal had been cleared away, and the wants of her pet kitten attended to, the little lady came on deck and commenced an animated conversation with Bob and me, as we smoked the pipe of peace (Ella declaring that she quite liked the odour of tobacco), asking a thousand questions, and full of wonder that such a "dear little tiny yacht" had come all the way from England.

She was most anxious to try her hand at steer-

ing, which she thought she could do quite well ; and I promised I would instruct her at a more favourable opportunity, explaining that we were just then so circumstanced that none but *experienced* helmsmen could be trusted with the tiller, it being more difficult to steer properly when running before the wind than at any other time.

“ But it *looks* quite easy,” she persisted, “ to hold that handle. *You* do not move it much, and surely I could do the little you are doing. I used to steer the *Copernicus* sometimes, but she never *would* go straight with *me* ; and it was *so* tiring to keep turning that great wheel round.”

Bob laughed joyously at this quaint speech, and proceeded laboriously to hold forth on the science of the helmsman, interlarding his lecture copiously with nautical illustrations and sea phrases, which were so much Greek to his pupil, who listened with an open-eyed earnestness which was most entertaining.

She heard Bob with the utmost patience and attention until he had utterly exhausted his entire stock of precepts, when she thanked him as courteously and sweetly as though she had understood

every word of it ; and then electrified us both, and set me off into a fit of perfectly uncontrollable laughter, by asking him, in the same breath, to sing her a song.

Whatever Bob's accomplishments might be, singing was certainly not one of them. He could hail the fore-royal-yard from the taffrail in a gale of wind, and make himself pretty plainly heard too ; but when it came to trolling forth a ditty, he had no more voice than a raven ; and my sister had often thrown him into a state of the most comical distress by proffering a similar request to that now made by his new friend.

As soon as she found that Bob really could not sing, she tried me ; and, as I was considered to have a very tolerable voice, I immediately complied, giving her " Tom Bowling " and a few more of Dibdin's fine old sea-songs, as well as one or two more frequently heard in a drawing-room, which I had learnt under my sister's able tuition.

She then sang us a few favourites of her own in a sweet clear soprano, and with a depth of feeling for the sentiment of the song which is but too seldom heard in the performances of amateurs.

About ten o'clock she wished us "good-night," and retired to her cot; and Bob then also went below and turned in, it being his "eight hours in" that night, and I was left to perform the rest of my watch alone.

The next morning, Bob turned out of his own accord, and made a surreptitious attempt to resume the duties of the *cuisine*; but at the first rattle of the cups and saucers he was hailed from the fore-compartment and ordered to desist at his peril, and in a very short time the little fairy appeared, blooming and fresh as the morning, and Master Bob received such a lecture that he was fain from that time forward to leave the cookery department entirely in her hands, and he retired discomfited to the deck, and began forthwith to wash down.

A permanent improvement now occurred in our style of living, and we began to enjoy many little comforts which, it is true, we never had missed, but which were singularly welcome nevertheless; and altogether we found ourselves vastly gainers by the presence of the sweet little creature on board.

She quickly learned to take the chronometer time for my observations, and that, too, with a precision which Bob himself could not surpass; and in a very short time she could steer as well as either of us, which was an immense advantage when shortening or making sail. Add to all this the amusement we derived from her incessant lively prattle, and the additional cheerfulness thus infused into our daily life, and the reader will agree with me, I think, that it was a lucky day for us when we first fell in with little Ella Brand.

CHAPTER II.

A MIRAGE.

By the time that our fair guest had been on board a week or ten days, she had put me in possession of probably every circumstance of importance which had occurred in her past history, and had also touched lightly upon her future, which, notwithstanding the natural buoyancy of her temperament, she seemed to regard with considerable apprehension.

It appeared that, in the first place, she had but a very imperfect idea as to the whereabouts of her relatives in England. She knew that her grandfather had a place somewhere down in Leicestershire, and she thought he also had a house in town ; but, as her mother had never heard from

him since her marriage, Ella had been utterly unable to find any clue to the old gentleman's address, after a most thorough search through such papers belonging to her parents as had fallen into her hands after her father's death.

Then, bearing in mind many conversations between her parents which had occurred in her presence, she felt the gravest doubt as to whether any of her relatives, when found, would even condescend so far as to acknowledge her as a relative, much less assist her in any way. She inclined to the opinion that they would not, and there were many circumstances to justify this sentiment, notably one which had occurred a short time previous to the departure of her parents from England.

Her father was at the time suffering from nervous debility and severe mental depression, the result of over-work and incessant anxiety; and to such a deplorable condition was he reduced that, for a considerable time, he was completely incapacitated for work of any kind.

The family resources dwindled to a low ebb,

the process being materially hastened by heavy doctors' bills and other expenses connected with Mr. Brand's condition, and the wife and mother found herself almost at her wit's-end to provide necessaries for her husband and child, utterly forgetful of herself all the time. At last, in sheer desperation, she wrote to her father describing her position, and entreating that assistance which he could so bountifully bestow—and her letter remained unanswered. She then wrote to her mother, and this time the letter was returned unopened.

She then tried her two brothers in succession, and finally her sister, and all her attempts to communicate with these unnatural relatives were treated with the same cold-blooded silence. Matters would soon have gone hard indeed with the Brand family had not a former suitor of Mrs. Brand's (who had been rejected in favour of the man she afterwards took for her husband) chivalrously came forward at this juncture, not only relieving their immediate necessities, but also using all his influence, which was potent, to obtain for Mr. Brand the appoint-

ment which the poor fellow held until his death.

“And supposing,” said I, after listening to this disheartening recital—“supposing that your relatives will *not* help you, have you any plans laid to meet such a contingency? ‘Hope for the best and provide for the worst’ is a favourite motto of your friend Bob; and I really think it is singularly applicable in your case.”

“No,” she replied rather despondently; “no very definite plan, that is. I am fairly well educated, I believe. Dear mamma was most accomplished, I have often heard papa say, and she taught me everything she knew. I speak French, German, and Italian, and seem to have a natural aptitude for music; and I sketch a little in water-colours. I have all my materials with me, and a few sketches which I may perhaps be able to sell when I reach home—I will let you see them some day—and I think I may perhaps be able to get a situation as governess, or maintain myself respectably by teaching music and drawing. And then, you know, I am not absolutely destitute. I have

about twenty pounds with me, and I sent home three hundred, the proceeds of the sale of our furniture, to England; and some friends of poor papa's in Canton say they are sure he must have some money invested somewhere, and they have promised to find out if it really is so, and to realise it for me; and I have given them the necessary powers to do so; so you see I shall not land in England actually a beggar."

"God forbid!" I earnestly ejaculated. "With regard to your landing in England, I ought perhaps to tell you that you must not hope to do so very soon. We are now in a part of the world quite out of the usual track of ships, and I fear it may be some time before we shall fall in with any, and when we do, it is questionable whether they will be quite the class of vessel you would like to make the voyage home in. My great hope is that we may soon fall in with a sandal-wood trader, in which case you would have an opportunity of returning to China, and re-shipping from thence home."

"I hope we shall," she responded; rather dolefully, I thought. "You have been very good

to me, and"—her eyes welling up with tears—"I shall never forget you; but I know my presence must be a great inconvenience and embarrassment to you."

"Pray stop!" I interrupted. "You are under the greatest misapprehension if you suppose your presence on board the *Water Lily* is any other than a source of the most unqualified gratification to her crew. You are evidently quite ignorant of the beneficent influences of your presence here, or you would never have spoken of it as an inconvenience. Your departure will occasion us the keenest regret whenever it takes place, and were it not that our cramped accommodations must occasion you very considerable discomfort, I should rejoice at almost any circumstance which would necessitate your remaining with us for the rest of the voyage."

"Do you really mean it?" she exclaimed, her sweet face brightening up at once. "Oh, I am *so* glad! Do you know I have thought your anxiety to meet with a ship arose from my being in your way, and troublesome? And you

are really willing to let me remain, and go home with you? How very kind it is of you! I will be quite good, and do whatever you tell me; and, indeed, I will not cause you the least bit of trouble. And"—her face clouding over again for a moment—"I so dread arriving in England an utter stranger, and having to search, quite unassisted, for grandpapa; and it would be so dreadful if he were to turn me away from his doors. And I should feel, oh! miserably friendless and lonely if I had really to go about from place to place seeking for a situation, or trying to get pupils. But if you will let me stay here and go home with you, I shall not feel it so much, for I am sure you will help me in my search for my friends; and it is so delightful"—brightening up again—"to be dancing over this bright, sparkling sea day after day, in this dear little yacht, and to see the kind faces of that darling old original Bob and—and—and—the kitten."

"And the fowls," I suggested demurely. "But, in electing to remain on board the *Water Lily*, you must bear in mind, my dear Miss Brand, that it is not always with us as it is at present.

Just now we are fortunate in the enjoyment of a fair wind and smooth sea, but we have been exposed to many dangers since we left England, and it is only reasonable to suppose we shall have to encounter many more before we return ; and if you went home in a larger vessel, if you did not escape them altogether, they would probably bring less discomfort in their train than they will here."

"What would you advise me to do?" she asked, looking ruefully up into my face.

"Well," I replied, "since you ask me, my advice is this. If we fall in with a comfortable ship, bound to England, or to any port whence you can trans-ship for England, go in her ; if the ship is *not* comfortable, and it comes to a choice of inconveniences, you can be guided by your own judgment, but do not leave us until you are sure of gaining some advantage by the change."

So it was settled. That same afternoon, as I was lying down on the lockers in our little cabin aft, I overheard the following conversation on deck, between Bob and Ella.

"Bob," said Ella (she soon dropped the Mr. in his case, but it was still "Mr. Collingwood" to me)—"Bob, are we likely to meet any ships very soon, do you think?"

"Ships!" echoed Bob, in consternation; "no, missie, I hopes not. You surely ain't tired of the little *Lily* yet, are ye?"

"No, indeed," replied Ella; "and I hope you are not tired of *me*. Tell me, Bob, am I very much trouble here, or very much in the way?"

"*Trouble! in the way!!*" repeated Bob; "Well, I'm——"—then a strong inspiration between the teeth, as though to draw back the forcible expression quivering on his lips—"but there, it's because you don't know what you're sayin' of, that you talks that a'way. What put that notion into your pretty little head?"

"Harry—Mr. Collingwood, I mean—seems anxious that I should go home in some other vessel," Ella replied, dolefully.

"Well, now, that's news, that is," answered Bob. "Since when has he taken that idee into his head?"

"We were talking about it this morning," said

Ella ; “ and he said it would be more dangerous for me to go home in the *Water Lily* than in a large ship. Is the *Water Lily* dangerous, Bob ? ”

“ Dangerous ! ” exclaimed Bob, in a tone of angry scorn. “ Was she dangerous in that blow off the Horn, when a big ship capsized and went down with all hands, close alongside of us ? Was she dangerous when we had that bit of a brush with the pirates ? If she hadn’t been the little beauty that she is she’d ha’ gone down in the gale, and a’terwards ha’ been made a prize of by the cut-throats.” (Bob, in his angry vindication of the cutter’s character, was wholly oblivious of the “ bull ” he had perpetrated, and Ella seemed too much interested to notice it.) “ Dangerous ! why, what’s the boy thinking about, to take away the little barkie’s character that a’way ? ”

“ I wish, Bob, you would not keep calling Ha—— Mr. Collingwood, a *boy* ; he is quite as much a man as you are, though of course not so old. I don’t like—I don’t think it sounds respectful,” exclaimed Ella rather petulantly.

“ Not call him a boy ? ” echoed Bob ; “ why

what *should* I call him then missie ? In course, now you comes to mention it, I knows as he *is* a man, and an uncommon fine speciment too ; but, Lord, when I knowed him fust he was quite a dapper young sprig ; and it comes nat'ral-like to speak of him as a boy. Hows'ever," continued he apologetically, "in course, since you don't like it, I won't call him a boy no more. What *shall* I call him, so please your ladyship ?"

"Now you are laughing at me, you horrid old creature," said Ella, with a little stamp of passion upon the deck ; "and I never said I did not like it, I merely said that it did not sound respectful. Why do you not call him captain ?"

— "Why not, indeed ?" answered Bob. "He's got as good a right to be called 'skipper' as e'er a man as ever walked a deck ; and dash my old wig if I ain't a good mind to do it, too ; my eyes ! how he would stare. 'Twould be as good as a pantomime to see him ;" and the worthy old fellow chuckled gleefully as his fancy conjured up the look of surprise which he knew such a title on his lips would evoke from me.

"I declare," exclaimed Ella in a tone of great

vexation, "you are the most provoking—— But there, never mind, Bob dear, I do not mean it; you are very kind to me, and must not take any notice of my foolish speeches. And so you really think the *Water Lily* is *not* dangerous? Why then should Mr. Collingwood wish me to leave her? He told me this morning that he should be sorry if I did so, and yet he seems unwilling to let me stay."

"Don't you believe it, little one," I heard Bob answer. "He don't want ye to go; it's some kind of conscientious scruple as he's got into his head that makes him talk that a'way. Between you and me"—here his voice sank to a kind of confidential growl, but I distinctly heard every word, nevertheless—"it's my idee that he's got some sort of a notion as we may yet fall in with that infarnal *Albatross* ag'in; but, if we do, we've got chances of getting away from the chap that large ships haven't; and for my part, if I must be in their blackguard neighbourhood, I'd a deal rather be in the *Lily* than in a large ship. Their best chance of getting the weather-gage of *us* is by surprise; but in a little barkie like this here

we larns the knack of sleeping with one eye open, and they'll have to be uncommon 'cute that surprises us."

"Oh!" exclaimed Ella, "I hope and pray that we may not see those wretches; it would be dreadful beyond description to fall into their hands. Do you think Mr. Collingwood would send me away if I said I did not want to go?"

"Not he, dearie," answered Bob; "why, can't ye see that he—— But there, I mustn't tell tales out of school. If we gets a *good* chance, perhaps it *might* be as well for ye to take advantage of it; but we ain't going to get it, so I lives in hopes of having your sweet face to brighten us up for the rest of this here v'yage. But it's eight bells, and time to rouse the 'skipper,' so just step down, dearie, will ye, and give him a call."

Why he should send Ella to call me when he had a voice capable of making the little craft's whole interior ring again, I could not imagine; but as her light step touched the ladder I closed my eyes, feeling somehow that I would rather the sweet little thing should not know I had overheard the conversation just past.

I had scarcely composed my features when she stood beside me. I had the feeling that she was stooping over me, and I certainly felt her warm breath upon my face for an instant; then she seemed to draw back again, and I heard a soft whisper of "Harry." Then there came a light touch upon my arm, and she said, much louder, "Mr. Collingwood, it is eight bells."

"Ay, ay," I answered, rubbing my eyes. Then I started to my feet, but the little fairy had gone fluttering away forward, so I took my sextant and went on deck. In a minute or two she reappeared, and, seeing me with the sextant in my hand, opened the chronometer and got the slate, in readiness for taking the time.

I obtained three most excellent sights, and from them worked up my longitude. I had obtained an accurate observation for my latitude at noon, and, on going below and laying off our position on the chart, I had the satisfaction of seeing that we were drawing well in with the islands, and that, if the breeze lasted, we should be fairly within the group by evening next day.

When I announced this intelligence to my companions, they were both delighted, Ella especially, she having seen no land since leaving the Sandwich Islands, which, she declared, was “*ages ago.*” The last land we had seen was Staten Island, though we caught the *loom* of land, or thought we did, when about abreast of the western end of Magellan Straits.

We were all longing for a run ashore; and, as I had resolved to thoroughly search the group, from end to end if need be, for traces of my father, I decided that we would commence with the eastern end, examining every island which in the slightest degree answered to the description given us of the spot on which the *Amazon* had been cast away.

Our little lady guest spent much of her time on deck—sitting in a deck-chair, within easy conversational range of whichever had the tiller; and she favoured me with her company during the whole of the first watch (it being my eight hours out that night); but she was unusually silent gazing in an absent, dreamy manner for the most of the time, far away over the tranquil starlit sea,

and softly humming a bar or two of some of her favourite songs occasionally. I made one or two attempts to draw her into conversation, fearing she was in low spirits, but she answered at random and in monosyllables; and, seeing after a while that I had no chance, I gave it up.

The next morning, when Bob came on deck to wash down, I said :

“ Bob, what is the matter with Miss Brand? have you any idea ?”

He looked curiously at me for a moment, and then said :

“ Matter? Nothing, as I knows on. What *should* be the matter with the little dearie?”

“ Nothing *should* be the matter with her,” I answered, rather tartly perhaps; “ but she seemed unusually silent and unlike herself last night: and, as you seem pretty deep in her confidence, I thought you might know the cause.”

“ Ay, ay,” he returned; “ she *do* speak pretty free to me, I’ll allow; which I accounts for by my being an old man—at least, *she* seems to think me so, if I may judge by what she

said yesterday ; and as to knowing the cause of her being out of sorts like, perhaps I do, and perhaps I don't. I has my suspicions, and pretty strong ones they be, too ; but it ain't for the likes of me to say a word. Ax no questions, Harry, my lad, but just leave things to work themselves out ; she'll be all right again shortly, you take my word for it."

"Is she ill, do you think, Bob ?" I inquired in some anxiety.

"Ill ! do she look like it ?" queried he with a loud laugh. "No, no, she's well enough ; but women's most oncommon difficult to understand, boy ; and the only way is to let 'em alone and take no notice when they seems queer. Now, don't ax me no questions, for I don't know anything about it, and what I *guess* I ain't going to tell."

What the old fellow surmised it was quite impossible for me to imagine, and equally impossible to extract from him, for he was as stubborn as a mule ; and if he made up his mind to a certain course nothing earthly had the power of turning

him from it; so, with the unpleasant sensation that there was a mystery somewhere, I was obliged to hold my tongue and console myself with the reflection that, at all events, it could be nothing which concerned me personally.

Shortly after the conversation Ella made her appearance at the head of the companion-ladder, and, bidding us both a cheery "Good-morning," summoned me to breakfast.

As soon as the coffee was poured out, and we had fairly commenced the meal, she said :

"If you ever have any secrets to discuss, Mr. Collingwood, I would advise you to seek some other place than the deck of the *Water Lily*. You sailors appear to have the habit of talking loudly in the open air, and I was awakened by your voices this morning, and quite unintentionally heard much, if not all, of your conversation. I am sorry that my quiet mood of last night should have given you any uneasiness, but I hope you will be relieved when I assure you that there was nothing whatever the matter with me. I am singularly susceptible to surrounding influences; and the solemn beauty of the night excited within

me a feeling of—not sadness altogether, but of gravity almost amounting to it, which has now entirely passed away. Your best plan will be to follow Bob's advice, and take no notice of my varying moods, for they really have no significance. I have not the least idea what it is that the worthy fellow suspects as being the matter with me ; but, whatever it is, he is quite mistaken, for I am happy to say I am perfectly well both in body and mind."

I felt greatly relieved at this explanation, and said so ; and Ella, as though to make up for her silence of the previous night, was rattling away in a more lively strain than ever, when Bob shouted from the deck, "Land ho !"

"Where away ?" queried I, springing to my feet, and leaving my breakfast unfinished.

"Right ahead, and up among the clouds, by all that's wonderful !" answered Bob.

I put my head above the companion, and there, sure enough, directly ahead, and about ten or twelve degrees above the horizon, appeared an island apparently floating in the air. It was low

and, judging from a small grove of trees which distinctly appeared, of no great extent. I took the glass, but through it everything presented a wavering appearance, as though the island and all upon it consisted of an infinite number of separate and distinct particles, each revolving in a spiral direction upwards. I called Ella on deck to see the singular phenomenon, for it was a more perfect example of mirage than I had ever before witnessed or could have believed possible. As we continued to gaze upon the curious spectacle a faint foamy appearance revealed itself between us and the island, but still in the sky; and about half an hour afterwards this distinctly took the form of flying spray from breakers beating upon a reef. The mirage lasted rather more than an hour, and then faded gradually away.

“How far d’ye reckon that island is away, Harry, lad?” queried Bob, when we had finished breakfast and were all mustered on deck once more.

“Really,” said I, “it is a very difficult matter to decide. By my reckoning we ought not to see it until about three this afternoon, with the wind

as it is; and I hope we *shall* see it by that time, so as to get inside the reef to-night. If it looks very enticing we will stay there a few days, and give the little craft an overhaul in hull, spars, and rigging; and Miss Brand will have an opportunity of getting a few runs on shore meanwhile, and perhaps a little fruit as a change of diet."

My reckoning proved correct, for about three o'clock that afternoon, as I was sitting aft with the tiller-ropes in my hand, I saw the tops of the cocoa-nut trees appearing above the horizon. As I did not wish to disturb Bob (not feeling sure of our being able to lie at anchor all night without a watch), I requested Ella—who, as usual, was *assisting* to keep the watch on deck—to take the tiller whilst I shortened sail. The spinnaker and gaff-topsail were got in and rolled up, the spinnaker-boom run in and topped up, and by the time that eight bells had struck, and Bob had come on deck, we were near enough to render it necessary to haul up and look out for a passage through the reef.

At first sight it seemed as though we were not to be permitted to approach the island, for an

unbroken line of heavy surf extended north and south to a distance of fully nine miles, completely barring our passing through the eastern side of the reef; and I began to believe that if a channel existed at all (and I felt sure there must be one somewhere), it must lie on the western side. However, I did not want to run to leeward if I could help it, for though the *Lily*, being fore-and-aft rigged, was better suited to turning to windward in a narrow passage than any other class of vessel, I did not wish to risk the boat by the performance of such a hazardous operation, for I had heard that the channels through these reefs were, some of them, so contracted that there was positively *no* room for even a small vessel to tack in many of the reaches. So I made a bowline in the end of the gaff-topsail halliards, and went aloft in it, with the intention of remaining there, if need be, to con the craft in.

We had hauled to the wind on the starboard tack, with our head to the northward, and the *Water Lily* was now, with her fore-sheet to windward, jogging quietly along towards the northern extremity of the island. I kept a careful watch

on the reef close to leeward, but we traversed its whole extent to the northward without any sign of a channel revealing itself, so I shouted to Bob to go round and stand to the southward again.

From my elevated position I was enabled to make a tolerably complete examination of the island, which exhibited no traces whatever, as far as I could see, of being inhabited. It appeared to be about six miles in length by about three in width at the widest part, though its coast-line was very irregular, and, in some places, I estimated that it was not much more than half that width.

It trended about north-north-east and south-south-west, and was very low, no part rising apparently much higher than forty or fifty feet above the level of the sea; whilst for the most part it did not appear to be higher than perhaps ten or twelve feet. Vegetation was extremely luxuriant, a small grove of coconuts occupying a very nearly central position, but on the western side of the island; whilst the remaining portion was pretty thickly covered

with less lofty trees, the ground being clothed with deliciously fresh green turf, and an endless variety of shrubs.

A narrow strip of clean white sand bordered the whole island, and outside of this again extended the placid waters of the lagoon, barely ruffled by the evening breeze. This lagoon was, as my readers will probably know, the belt of water which surrounded the island, intervening between it and the encircling coral-reef on which the heavy swell expended all its force, without being able to reach and disturb the still water inside.

We were within a mile and a half of the southern extremity of the island, when I detected a thin line of unbroken water tortuously threading its way across the reef, and extending clear into the lagoon. Its mouth would never have been observed from our deck, or indeed from the deck of a ship, for the channel entered the reef at an acute angle; and the surf broke so heavily upon the outside and overlapping ledge that the foam and spray were carried quite across the narrow opening, and mingled

with the broken water on the opposite side.

But from my elevation I could see that there the channel was, and having satisfied myself, as we drew down towards it, that it was unbroken, I decided to run in through it.

Had the *Lily* been a moderately large vessel or square-rigged, she could not have been taken through, for there was one point about midway across the reef where I believed the passage could not exceed thirty feet in width, and it was at a very awkward bend; and there were so many sharp *turnings* (to use a shore phrase) that a square-rigged vessel's yards could not have been handled rapidly enough to meet her frequent and quickly succeeding changes of direction. But it was very different with us.

I directed Bob to haul aft his weather-jib-sheet and lee-fore-sheet, thus providing for the keeping of one of the head-sails always full, and to trim his mainsail with a moderately flowing sheet; after which he might leave the canvas to take care of itself, whilst he gave his undivided attention to the helm.

This was soon done, and we bore away in the direction I indicated. The look-out ahead from the deck must have been alarming enough, for great as was Bob's confidence in my judgment, and steady as were his nerves, he could not forbear hailing me.

"I hope, Harry," shouted he, "that you're quite sartain about that there passage. I sees nothing ahead, or anywheres else for that matter, on either bow but surf; and mind ye, lad, if we but touches *once*, the little barkie 'll be knocked into match-wood. We may still claw off if there's any doubt."

"Port, hard!" answered I, "too intent on the channel to enter into any explanation just then. Steady!"

"Steady!" responded Bob. "You stay close to me, dearie, so's to be within reach if anything happens, and mind you don't get knocked overboard with the boom. Ah! all right; I sees the opening."

The *Water Lily* shot in past the overlapping ledge; and my companions on deck were treated to a copious shower-bath of spray for a

few seconds, and then we began to feel the shelter of the reef.

We shot along the first reach, and soon approached a sharp elbow.

"Look out on deck!" I shouted; "we are about to jibe; and you, Bob, stand by to give her the helm smartly. Steady starboard! now starboard hard! ram the helm down! so, steady! Now port a little! steady again! luff you may, handsomely; not too close! And now stand by for a half-board! Luff! let her come up! luff and shake her! so! Now hard up!"

And so on, and so on. Luff, and keep her away; then jibing; now on one tack, now on another; until, after about ten minutes of most ticklish navigation, the cutter shot clear of the reef, and glided rapidly over the smooth water of the lagoon.

Bob let draw his jib-sheet, and we stood away towards the southern extremity of the island, which we soon rounded; I remaining still aloft to look out for any sunken rocks that might chance to be lying about. But the bottom was

quite clear, the sand being distinctly visible from my post at the mast-head.

We were now on the western side of the island, and I observed that the grove of cocoa-nut trees before referred to stood upon the border of a pretty little bay, or cove rather, for it was very small; and as this spot promised very snug anchorage close to the shore, I directed Bob to steer for it, and then descended to the deck and got the anchor over the bows in readiness for letting go.

As we drew closer to the land, our sails became partially becalmed under the lee of the trees and shrubs which densely covered the southern end of the island, whilst the water was undisturbed by the faintest ripple save that which streamed away on each side of our sharp bow.

As I stood forward, looking down into the clear transparency of the cool green depths, I could discern here and there a few large branches of splendid coral projecting through the sand, with multitudes of strangely-formed fishes darting round and about them; and in one spot I ob-

served what appeared to be a small bed of oysters, of which I instantly took the bearings, resolving to pay it a visit and try for a few.

At length we slid gently into our little cove. Bob put his helm down ; the cutter luffed into the wind, and, as soon as her way was deadened sufficiently, I let run the anchor ; after which, with one accord, Bob and I took off our hats and gave three joyous cheers. It was the first time we had brought up since leaving Madeira.

We soon had our canvas furled, and, whilst Ella busied herself with the preparations for tea, Bob and I got our "boat" on deck, and set about putting her together.

Whilst thus engaged, my companion remarked, "Well, Harry, I must say I didn't like the looks of things, for a minute or two, whilst we was running down upon the reef outside ; but you piloted us in in capital style. Did ye happen to think, however, how we're going to get out ag'in, now that we're here ?"

"Certainly I did," replied I. "You surely do

not imagine that I would run in here, without being satisfied beforehand that we could get out again all right. There was no time for explanation whilst I was aloft; but, just before I caught sight of the channel through which we entered, I distinctly saw one on *this* side of the island, through which we could have beaten the little craft without much difficulty. It appeared to have only two reaches, and I think we might have laid up one of them on the port tack, and the other on the starboard tack; and as to getting out, it will be a run with the wind free all the way. But what do you think of our berth?"

"Snug and comfortable as heart could wish," responded he, with an accent of keen enjoyment; "and I *do* hope as you'll give us all, and the little craft, a holiday of a day or two, now we're here. 'Twon't do any of us any harm; and I really feels as though I could go ashore and lie down under the shade of them trees all day, and do nothing but just enj'y the rest and the coolness, and ease my old eyes by looking up at the beautiful green leaves, with the clear blue sky peeping between 'em here and there."

I had a very similar feeling ; for, though the island had nothing very specially attractive about it, to us who had looked on nothing but sky and sea for so long, it appeared but little short of a paradise. So I very readily acquiesced in his proposal, the more so as I felt that our health would be very greatly benefited by the change.

By the time that we had our boat put together and hanging astern by her painter, tea was ready ; so, after a comfortable ablution, by way of bringing the day's work to a close, we all seated ourselves at the small cabin table, and discussed our meal with a luxurious enjoyment of the perfect steadiness of the cutter, and of the absence of all anxiety of every kind, which was quite a novelty. We finished the meal by lamp-light, and then adjourned to the deck, where, as was our regular custom, Bob and I smoked our evening pipes.

Those only who have endured the monotony of a long sea-voyage can understand the pleasure with which we regarded our surroundings, and compared them with those of many an evening past. The night had completely closed in, and

the deep, unclouded, purple vault above was thickly studded with stars, which, unlike those in the northern hemisphere, instead of *glittering* spark-like and cold, beamed with the deep, mellow lustre of the softest lamps, each being clearly reflected in the mirror-like surface of the unruffled lagoon.

We were, as I believe I have said before, on the western or lee side of the island, so completely sheltered from the wind by the thick-clustering trees and shrubs which covered its surface, that only the faintest zephyr could approach us, though it swept briskly through the topmost branches of the cocoa-nuts, gently agitating their leaves, and producing a soft rustling sound, above which the loud roar of the surf beating on the reef to windward could be distinctly heard. Mingling with this, there issued from the shore a continuous chirping and singing from innumerable multitudes of insects, which, swelling shrill and high, merged into one vast wave of sound, which completely filled the air. Tens of thousands of fire-flies flitted to and fro, their tiny sparks gleaming brilliantly against the

dark background of dense foliage; and, if we looked over the side for a moment, we saw the deep obscurity of the tranquil ocean constantly flashing into sudden brightness, as a long trail of pale phosphorescent sparks, or a momentary halo, betrayed the movement of some finny denizen of the deep.

We remained on deck until nearly midnight, when, having observed nothing whatever to excite the slightest apprehension as to our absolute safety, we resolved to dispense with the formality of a watch; and therefore all retired below, with an understanding that the morrow was to be observed as a strict holiday by all hands.

CHAPTER III.

AT CLOSE QUARTERS WITH A SHARK.

I AWOKE soon after sunrise the next morning, and, calling Bob, in accordance with an arrangement made overnight, we both jumped on board the boat, and, pulling to the opposite side of a tiny headland about a mile away, stripped and plunged overboard, where we swam and dived, and wallowed about in the deliciously cool element for a good half-hour, enjoying our bath as thoroughly as though we were a couple of school-boys playing truant. We were strongly tempted to make a small preliminary exploring excursion inland after this, but Miss Ella had solemnly bound us both down not to do so without her; so we returned to the *Water Lily*

instead, wonderfully refreshed and invigorated by our dip, and quite ready for the early breakfast which was to form the first regular feature in the programme for the day.

As we rowed back to the cutter, I embraced the opportunity to pass once more over the spot where I thought I had observed the oyster-bed ; and, on reaching it, and peering down in the shadow of the boat, I found I was right ; there lay beneath us a bed of several yards extent of what I felt sure were oysters.

We described a short circuit round our little craft before stepping on board again ; and I felt so ashamed of her dingy, weather-beaten appearance, that I resolved she should have a fresh coat of paint before she went outside again. This we decided she should receive next day, I undertaking to wield the paint-brush whilst Bob employed himself in overhauling the rigging and examining the spars.

Breakfast was soon disposed of, as we were all equally eager to stand once more on mother earth ; and then, Bob providing himself with a few biscuits, whilst I did the same, adding a

few knick-knacks for my fair companion, we jumped into the boat, and in a very few minutes reached the shore.

The painter was made fast to the stem of a stout shrub which grew close to the water's edge; and then Bob went straight towards the widest patch of shade, and the softest turf he could find, and flung himself forthwith upon the ground, asserting that it was his fixed intention to remain there for the rest of the day, and enjoy his holiday in accordance with his own peculiar notions.

After a few vain attempts to persuade him that he would find it much more pleasant to accompany us in a ramble over the island, we gave him up to his own devices; and, Ella accepting the support of my arm, we strolled slowly away.

Our steps were directed, in the first instance, towards the northern end of the island; our path being sometimes over the short tender grass with which the ground was thickly clad, and at others along the sandy beach, to which we were occasionally compelled to diverge in consequence of the

dense undergrowth, through which it would have been impossible for my companion to force her way.

We picked up several very beautiful shells on the beach, and Ella promised herself a long ramble before leaving the island, expressly for the purpose of collecting a few of the choicest varieties.

I was rather disappointed to find such a scarcity of fruit, there being none, as far as we could discover, beyond the cocoa-nuts and a few wild figs: the latter rather insipid to the taste, though still a welcome change after the food we had all been accustomed to.

Ella very thoughtfully collected a little of this fruit for Bob, when we chanced to meet with a tree bearing figs of a superior flavour to the average, and I promised her that on our return I would secure a few cocoa-nuts, and treat her to a draught of the delightfully refreshing cool new milk. We found walking to be far more fatiguing than we had expected, after being pent up so long on shipboard, and I think I found it even more so than my companion, she having had until recently the comparatively wide range of a ship's deck

upon which to take exercise; whilst we of the *Water Lily* could only boast of "a fisherman's walk, two steps, and overboard."

I kept a sharp look-out for fresh water, intending to entirely refill our tank and casks; and Ella was equally anxious for such a discovery, as she gave me notice that she intended to hold a grand wash; desiring me, at the same time, to make up a bundle of all my soiled linen, etc., and deliver it over to her. This I, of course, flatly refused to do, assuring her that I was fully equal to the task of doing my own washing, and that I never would consent to her descending to the performance of so menial a task for me.

"What!" said she, releasing my arm to speak with the greater energy. "not allow me to wash a few shirts and socks for you, and your pocket-handkerchiefs? Indeed, but you *must*; it is woman's peculiar province to wash clothes. Men never wash properly: they either half do it or else beat to pieces whatever they may be washing in the vain endeavour to properly purify it. Now you *must* let me have my own way just this once, please."

I still refused, and added laughingly :

“ It seems to me to be a part of your creed that ‘ it is woman’s peculiar province ’ to do certain things for men ; and that, if she is not at hand to do it, it cannot be done at all, or at all events in a satisfactory manner. I remember your urging the plea that ‘ it is woman’s peculiar province ’ to cook, as a means whereby to gain my consent to your taking charge of that department ; and very grateful am I to you for so doing, for we have enjoyed our meals as we never did before ; but as to your doing any washing but your own, I cannot and *will* not consent to it.”

“ But *why* not ? ” she persisted. “ Woman was created as a help-meet for man ; and I am sure you will admit that our sex is more thoroughly qualified for the performance of certain duties than is man ; and, where that is distinctly the case, it seems to me to point naturally to the conclusion that such duties form a part of her share of the work necessary for the comfort and happiness of the race. Of course I would not offer to wash for you or for myself, if we were in a large ship and with proper servants to do such work ; but in

our present circumstances I see nothing whatever of a menial or degrading character in it."

"Perhaps not," I replied. "I cannot enter quite so deeply as you do into the question. I can only say that the idea is too repugnant for me to consent to any such division of the 'necessary work': so please say no more about it, for my mind is made up, and I can be as stubborn as Bob himself upon occasion."

"I quite believe you," she retorted, half playfully and half disposed to be angry; "though I do not consider Bob stubborn at all. *He* always lets me do whatever I like; and what an original character he is. Do you know, I quite admire him. He is somewhat rough and unpolished, I admit, but he is as gentle to me as was my own dear mamma; and I hold to the opinion that a man who is gentle and courteous to women is a man of sterling worth, let his manner be as uncouth as it may. I believe that gentleness and courtesy to our sex is the *first* and most distinguishing mark of nature's nobility. But why do you permit him to be so familiar and disrespectful in his manner of addressing you?"

"I do not consider him in the slightest degree disrespectful," I replied. "He is much older than I am, and a man of far wider experience, at all events in all matters connected with our profession ; and that, and our long and severely-tried friendship, abundantly justifies the familiarity of his mode of address. I dislike formality with every one except strangers. It is all very well as a means of keeping at a distance those you dislike and have no desire to become intimate with, but it is a rather formidable barrier to friendship."

"So I think," responded Ella with animation. "I *do* so wish——"

"What?" I inquired.

She hesitated a little and blushed a great deal, and then, apparently with some effort, replied :

"Well, I wish you would exchange the formal 'Miss Brand' for the more friendly and familiar 'Ella ;' that is, if you consider me worthy of your friendship."

"I will indeed," I replied, "with very great pleasure, if you will permit me to do so ; and I

trust that you, in return, will call me, as I love to be called by all my friends—Harry.”

“Very well,” she replied gaily, “I will; that is, as long as you are good to me, and do not displease me in any way. The sign of my sovereign displeasure will be a return to the formality of ‘Mr. Collingwood.’”

We chatted blithely on after this upon all sorts of subjects, and I was both surprised and delighted at the depth and extent of my companion’s information. She had evidently read much, and, what was more to the purpose, had selected her reading with sound judgment, storing her mind abundantly with useful facts which she always had ready for production in support of an argument, or by way of illustration, and she frequently graced her conversation with choice quotations, introduced in the best taste and with a manner as far as possible removed from anything like affectation or pedantry. I was charmed beyond measure, and over and over again thanked the lucky accident which had rendered it my good fortune to be put upon terms of such close intimacy with so fascinating a little creature.

At length we completed our tour of the northern end of the island, returning by way of the eastern shore, until we were abreast the clump of cocoa-nut trees ; when we struck inland ; and, after a somewhat tortuous course between the thick-growing shrubs, reached the beach on our own side once more.

Unfortunately for Ella's projected laundry operations, we had not been able to discover the slightest sign of a spring of fresh water anywhere.

When we arrived opposite the point where the *Water Lily* rode peacefully at anchor, Bob was nowhere to be seen. The boat still remained moored to the shrub, as we had left her, so I concluded that he had grown tired of inactivity and had gone off, in the opposite direction to ourselves, for a stroll. I therefore proposed to Ella that she should rest awhile upon the soft, velvety turf, whilst I returned to the cutter for a piece of rope, to aid me in my ascent after the cocoa-nuts.

The rope was soon obtained ; and, returning to the shore, I passed it in a loose band round the

trunk of one of the trees, leaving room in the band for the introduction of my own body.

By bearing against this whilst I raised my feet and then slipping the band up the tree, I was easily and quickly enabled to reach the fruit, from which I selected an abundant supply of the finest specimens and flung them to the ground.

Whilst thus engaged Bob hove in sight, and when I reached the ground again he reported that, having soon grown tired of doing nothing, he had started away on a walk to the southward, about half an hour after we left him, and had gone to the extreme end of the island; that he had enjoyed his walk amazingly, was excessively tired, and, like ourselves, had failed to find any fresh water.

Under these circumstances poor little Ella was compelled to postpone her washing-day, I promising that she should have the necessary time allowed her at the first suitable island we happened to reach.

By this time the dinner-hour was approaching, and Ella desired to be put on board the cutter

to make the few slight preparations for the meal which were necessary.

As soon as we had put her on board and whilst she was thus engaged, I took Bob away with me in the boat to try for a few oysters. We had no means of trawling for them; but I estimated that they lay in not more than about two and a half fathoms of water, and I considered myself quite diver enough to reach that distance.

As soon as we arrived at the spot I stripped and plunged in, taking down with me an old canvas clothes-bag, which I slung round my neck.

I soon found that I had been deceived, by the crystal transparency of the water, into underestimating the depth. It was fully four fathoms to the bottom; and this, together with the difficulty I experienced in keeping the mouth of the bag open, necessitated four plunges before I had obtained half the bag full. There was not time to do more just then, so I dressed, the bag was hauled up, and we returned with our prize to the cutter.

We resolved to commence dinner with a course of oysters, and I forthwith proceeded to open some, a task which gave me a very considerable amount of difficulty.

Imagine, if you can, my surprise and delight when on opening the second oyster I found that it contained several small pearls; the third was opened, and it also contained several; the fourth had none, but the fifth on being opened revealed three beauties, each as large as the top of my middle finger. To be brief, I was soon satisfied that I had stumbled upon a bed of pearl-oysters, about half of the bivalves yielding when opened more or less pearls, the greater quantity being small, such as are set in rings; but several good-sized pearls were also found, and one magnificent fellow, as large as a cherry.

As may easily be imagined, we were all excitement after this; and I proposed that, as soon as dinner was over, we should move the cutter down and anchor her upon the bed, and devote the remainder of the afternoon to systematic pearl-fishing. The proposition was rap-

turously received, Ella declaring that she had often read of pearl-fishing, and should very much like to witness the operation.

Accordingly, dinner was no sooner over than we weighed and stood down to the spot under our jib, and having reached it the cutter was anchored as nearly as possible over the centre of the bed. I had hit upon a plan by which, I thought, some of my difficulties of the morning might be got over; and, as soon as we were brought up, Bob and I got our floating-anchor on deck, stretched the canvas upon it, and rigging out our spinnaker-boom, a rope was passed through the sheave in the outer end of it, and bent to the crowfoot of the floating-anchor, which, thus hung suspended, like a large tray, over the water. It was then lowered to the bottom; a small pig of ballast was got on deck and slung to another rope's end, and I then went below and changed my dress for an old white shirt and duck trousers, buckling a belt round my waist, to which, as it happened, a strong sharp sheath-knife was attached.

Being now ready to descend I looked over the

side, and satisfied myself that our floating-anchor lay all right at the bottom, and in such a manner as properly to perform its new functions as a tray. I then slipped over the side into the water, grasping firmly the rope to which the piece of ballast was attached; and, having well filled my lungs with air, I waved my disengaged hand. Bob let go the rope, and the ballast dragged me swiftly to the bottom.

Still retaining my hold upon the sinker with one hand, I now rapidly shovelled the oysters into my "tray" with the other, as long as I could hold my breath; and I was satisfied, at the first experiment, that my expedient was a complete success, thrice as many oysters being deposited in the tray at one dive as I had obtained altogether in the morning.

I soon had to rise to get a fresh inhalation; but by hauling up the sinker every time, so as to have the benefit of its assistance in taking me to the bottom, I was enabled to reserve all my breath and energy for my work at the oysters; and so successful was I, that, in three descents, I managed to place upon the tray as many

oysters as it would hold. It was now hauled up, its contents carefully transferred to the cutter's deck, and the anchor or tray again lowered to the bottom.

This operation had been repeated five times, with the result that a goodly pile of bivalves now graced the deck ; and I had gone down a second time on the sixth *round* (if I may so express myself), when suddenly a dark shadow fell upon the spot on which I was at work. I glanced upward, and, to my unspeakable horror, saw an enormous shark floating motionless within a fathom of, and directly above me.

Why he did not attack me at once I could not imagine ; but I conjecture that it was because, lying flat upon the ground as I was, he had not room to turn, as sharks invariably do when seizing their prey. My blood seemed fairly to congeal in my veins as I realised my appalling position.

I *must* rise to the surface in a very few seconds or drown where I was ; and I felt convinced that the moment I was far enough from the

bottom to permit of the monster making his rush, he would do so.

Suddenly, the remembrance of my sheath knife flashed across my brain. There was no time to hesitate; my powers of endurance were almost utterly exhausted, and I felt that I could hold my breath but a second or two longer; so I quickly drew the knife, and darting suddenly upwards, succeeded in grasping the shark with my left hand by his starboard fin, whilst with my right I plunged my weapon to the hilt in his gleaming white belly, extending my arm to its full length as I did so, and thus inflicting a wound nearly or quite two feet in length.

Remembering the wonderful vitality of the shark, I did not content myself with this; but thrusting my armed hand into the gaping wound, I drew the knife two or three times rapidly across his interior arrangements, inflicting such severe injuries that in less than a minute after I rose to the surface blood-stained from head to foot, and speechless with exhaustion, the shark

also appeared, floating dead within a dozen yards of the cutter.

Bob's strong and ready hand was promptly extended to assist me in over the cutter's low gunwale ; but so thoroughly exhausted was I, that I felt utterly unable to make the slightest effort in aid of my shipmate's exertions, and he was obliged to drag me bodily inboard, where, after an unavailing effort to stand, I sank upon the deck, gasping for breath, and utterly unable to utter a word.

Ella's eager face blanched deadly white at the horrifying spectacle I presented as I lay prone at her feet, my once white clothing now deeply imbued with blood, and I thought she would have fainted ; but she struggled bravely against the weakness, though she could not repress a violent shudder, which thrilled through her from head to foot.

Sinking to her knees at my side, she gently raised me until my head rested upon her throbbing breast, and gazing upon my face with a look expressive of the deepest anxiety, she in-

quired, "Where are you hurt, Harry? Is it much? Are you in *very* great pain?"

I made a powerful but unavailing effort to reply, when seeing my lips move, but without any sound issuing from them, she suddenly lost her self-control, and shrieking, "He is dying, Bob; dying, I tell you. Oh! what can we do to save him?" burst into an overwhelming passion of tears; and clasping me convulsively to her bosom, she sobbed forth wild prayers for mercy, mingled with the tenderest and most endearing epithets that ever sprang from the heart of a passionately loving woman to her lips.

Surprised beyond all power of expression, and almost overwhelmed with delight at this utterly unexpected betrayal of her feeling for me, I could not suffer her to continue; so having by this time somewhat recovered my breath, I gasped out, "I am not hurt, Ella; indeed I am not; I was only overcome for the moment with exhaustion; pray calm yourself."

"Not hurt!" she exclaimed eagerly; "not injured at all? Thank God, oh, thank God for

that ! But—was it kind, sir—was it like a gentleman, to permit me to be surprised into such expressions as those which have just escaped my lips ? How can I ever hold up my head again in your presence, or look you in the face ?”

“ Hush, Ella, darling,” I whispered. “ Do not distress yourself, I entreat you. I have much to say to you, and what has just passed has but precipitated matters a little. Retire below for a short time, and calm your agitated feelings ; and this evening I will ask you to favour me with a few minutes of your society on shore, when I will enter into such explanations as I trust will prove entirely satisfactory, and have the effect of completely healing your wounded sensibility. “ Why,” continued I cheerily, “ that is well ; the roses are already returning to your cheeks, and by the time that I have been down once or twice more, and have secured another——”

“ Merciful Heaven !” she exclaimed, in horrified accents, “ do I hear aright ? Is it possible you can be mad enough to contemplate going into the water again, after having so narrowly escaped from such a horrible death ? You *must* not,

Harry ; and you *will* not, if you entertain the slightest feeling of—of—friendship for me. Indeed, I could not bear it ; another shock, such as I have just received, would kill me. *Pray* have some little compassion upon me.”

“Enough, Ella, and more than enough,” I answered, deeply moved. “Henceforward your wishes are law to me ; and, since you object to my going overboard again, I promise you faithfully that I will not do so. Now go below, dear, and lie down for a short time, whilst Bob and I take the cutter back to her old moorings.”

As soon as she was out of sight, Bob, who had stood patiently on one side whilst the above *dénouement* was taking place, approached, and, extending his hand, exclaimed :

“Now that the little beauty has done with ye, lad, give an old friend a shake of your flipper. I’m right down glad to see ye well and hearty, my dear boy,” he continued, with strong emotion. “We both saw that doubly and everlastingly——brute range up and take a berth close above ye ; and, to own the plain, honest truth, I put ye down as good as done for. There warn’t no

time to do anything by way of warning ye, or lending ye a hand anyways; for, afore I could collect my scattered wits, we saw ye let go the sinker, and next minute the water alongside was like a biling pot; and then we seed the blood, and —— me if I didn't turn that sick and queer I couldn't see a thing, just for a moment; and when I hauled ye aboard, I couldn't for the life of me tell whether you was dead or alive. Now let's get up them few h'isters that was like to have cost us all so dear, and get away from the spot as soon as we can."

We were not very long in getting the remainder of the oysters on board, and soon afterwards we had the cutter back at her old berth. Our first task, as soon as the craft was at anchor again, was to transfer our booty to the shore, where we spread them out on a large tarpaulin on the sand to die. The method pursued by the regular pearl-fishers, I believe, is to allow the fish to remain until they are in an advanced stage of decay, when the pearls are sought for amongst the putrid mass. I felt no inclination, however, for such a task, and, moreover, did not care to

expend so much time as this process involved. I conjectured that, the fish once dead, they might be opened with comparatively little difficulty ; and I thought that by the time our overhaul and painting was completed, the oysters would be in a fit state for operating upon.

Ella now reappeared on deck somewhat more composed, though there was still a slight nervous flutter perceptible in her movements. I took advantage of her presence on deck to remark casually that I would now go below and change my dress, and cleanse myself from the traces of my recent encounter, which I forthwith did ; and when I had refreshed myself with a copious ablution, I really felt very little the worse for my adventure. Indeed, I believe that I was less discomposed by it than either of the others.

After tea was over, I took occasion to remind Ella that I had somewhat to say to her, and requested her to accompany me on shore and take a short walk on the beach, that I might speak without being embarrassed by Bob's presence.

She stepped silently into the boat, and in a few

minutes more we stood together on the strand. Taking the arm which I offered her, she said :

“ Now, Harry, what is it you wish to say to me ?”

“ Simply this,” I replied. “ From the nature of my occupation I have had, as you may suppose, but very few opportunities of associating with your sex. With the solitary exception of my sister, I cannot say that I am intimately acquainted with any woman ; and I am an utter stranger to everything relating to womankind. I know nothing whatever of their characteristics, and have not the slightest idea of how they are likely to be influenced by powerful emotions. It may be that, under such circumstances, they sometimes utter words of which they are wholly unconscious, and which have not the most remote relation to their actual sentiments. If this really be the case, a man of honour, chancing to hear such words escape the lips of a lady, will forthwith forget that they were ever uttered. This I am prepared to do with regard to the words spoken by you this afternoon, Ella, if you wish me to understand that they had no meaning.

True, it will dispel a brief but blissful dream in which I have dared to indulge for a short hour or two : but what right have I to suppose that I have awakened within your breast any sentiment beyond that of the merest friendship, if I may dare to aspire even to that, especially when I take into consideration the shortness of the time you have known me ? It has been but a few days, I know ; but almost from the moment that we met upon the deck of the *Copernicus*, a new and hitherto unknown feeling has animated me ; it has grown with every hour of my life since then, and, without analysing its nature, I have permitted it to strengthen until it has become a part of my very life itself ; a feeling which I must perforce still continue to cherish—whether for weal or for woe, it is for *you* to say—as long as life remains. In saying that I never analysed this feeling I am stating what is strictly true ; but in that dread moment this afternoon, when I unexpectedly found myself face to face with death in one of its most dreadful forms ” —my companion shuddered violently—“ in that terrible moment, I say, the discovery flashed upon me that the feeling to which I have referred

is *love*, the most passionate, devoted, idolising love. Tell me, Ella, tell me, my darling, may I dare to hope that at some time in the distant future, when you shall have had opportunities of becoming better acquainted with me——”

“Cease, Harry,” the dear girl interrupted with deep emotion, “cease, I pray you, to agitate yourself with causeless fears. Why should I hesitate—after having already given such unequivocal expression to my feelings—to avow that, like yourself, I have loved almost from the first moment of our meeting. I know not whether now, or at any future time, you will deem my heart too easily won; but, if you do, remember that the advantage has been from the first all on your side. You appeared as my deliverer from a situation of peculiar trial to a young and delicately brought-up girl, and of peril the nature and extent of which you are better able to realise than I am to tell: so, in judging me, you must not forget to take into consideration, and give me the benefit of, the peculiar circumstances of the case. And whether lightly won or not, you shall find, dear Harry, that my love is not the less sincere

and loyal on that account : for *never* was there a truer or more devoted wife than I will be to you, if it please God to permit us to become united."

And saying this, my little darling turned, and with unaffected confiding simplicity, wound her soft arms about my neck, and raised her sweet lips to mine.

The conversation which followed, deeply interesting as it was to the parties engaged, need not be reproduced here : suffice it to say that the insight I thus obtained of Ella's character and disposition amply justified the sudden and precipitate step I had taken. That it *was* precipitate I could not and did not attempt to conceal from myself, and that it would have been highly imprudent under ordinary circumstances thus to connect myself by so binding a tie as betrothal to one of whose very existence I was ignorant but a short fortnight before, I was also fully aware ; but, after all, marriage is, to a very great extent, a lottery ; and one can never be really certain, until after the nuptial knot has been tied, whether one has drawn a prize or a blank.

There are some women in whom a fresh trait of character is always revealing itself, so that, just when you think you have at last succeeded in thoroughly understanding them, you discover that you are just as far off any reliable knowledge of their character as ever.

But with Ella it was very different. There was a childlike openness and ingenuousness of manner about her which quickly revealed to the observer, not only the salient points, but also the finer gradations of her character and temperament; and I believe that I had a clearer insight into both at the time that I thus hastily offered myself, than many men who do the same thing after an acquaintance of a "season," and with such knowledge as they are able to pick up by meeting their charmer at balls, picnics, canters in the "Row," and what not.

At length we returned to the cutter, where we found Bob, with his pipe still between his teeth, sitting aft fast asleep. I wished Ella "good-night," and then roused Master Bob up; and whilst we smoked a final pipe together, communicated my good fortune to him.

“Ay, ay!” said he, as soon as I had told him, “you may thank ‘Jack Shark’ for having it come upon ye so soon, lad; it was *bound* to come sooner or later. I’ve seed it clearer and clearer every day, but it warn’t for me to say a word one way or t’other; but the narrer squeak you had for it this a’ternoon just took the little lady flat aback, and afore she could pay off, you see, she let run a whole string of lovin’ words that there warn’t no way of hauling aboard and coiling down out of sight ag’in; and so she hadn’t no ch’ice but just to haul down her colours as soon as you opened fire. Well, you’ve made a pretty prize, Harry, and I congratulate ye with all my heart. A trimmer model, or one better ballasted with the right sort of feelin’s and idees, no man need wish to sail the v’y’ge of life in company with, and as to her being fond of ye, why, she couldn’t help showing of it, try all she would. She couldn’t talk of nothing else from morning to night but you. It don’t matter what the conversation started with, whether ’twas ships, or flyin’-fish, or hurricanes, waterspouts—*anything* in heaven or airth, she’d bring it all round in a

sort of great-circle-sailing fashion to you. And now that you've got her, lad, I hope as you'll be able to sail her properly. Women is very ticklish craft to handle, you must bear in mind ; as tender in a squall as a racin' cutter with all her flyin'-kites aloft ; and you'll have to keep a sharp look-out to win'ard, and have the halliards and sheets all ready for lettin' run at a moment's notice, or you'll maybe get something ser'ous carried away, or have a reg'lar downright wrack altogether afore you knows where you are."

I could not help smiling at this characteristic speech of congratulation and caution of Bob's, to which I of course made a suitable reply ; and then shaking hands, we went below and tumbled into our respective hammocks.

CHAPTER IV.

THE *LILY* AMONG BREAKERS.

THE next morning we were up betimes, and, that Ella might be removed from the scene of dirt and confusion which the cutter would present during the day, our first act was to convey on shore the necessary gear and materials for the preparation and consumption of our meals there, it being anticipated that one day would suffice for all we intended to do just then.

By the time that we had done so and had returned to the cutter, Ella made her appearance on deck, greeting me affectionately, and then turning to thank Bob for the congratulations the honest and warm-hearted fellow saw fit to offer

on the occasion. These over, I pulled the dear girl ashore, and she forthwith set about seeking for a favourable spot where to spread the tablecloth upon the sward, and to arrange her equipage, a fire having already been lighted and the kettle suspended over it, gipsy-fashion, from three crossed sticks.

Whilst she was thus engaged I returned on board, and routed out our small stock of paints, and set to work mixing them, whilst Bob, having already washed down inboard, busied himself in casting off and easing up the rigging preparatory to a regular overhaul, the first thing after breakfast.

As soon as the meal was ready, Ella came down to the beach and waved her pocket-handkerchief, the signal agreed upon; and we pulled ashore and took a hasty meal, it being understood that the day would be a busy one, I being desirous of finishing all before sunset, so as to make a start again next day, there being nothing to detain us or to make it worth our while to prolong our stay where we then were.

Breakfast over, Bob and I pulled back to the cutter, where we at once commenced work in earnest, leaving Ella to amuse herself by strolling along the shore and making her proposed collection of shells. By dinner-time I succeeded in finishing the painting, giving the craft not only a coat of black from her rail down to the copper, with a white stripe or ribbon round the ornamental groove cut for that purpose in the covering-board, but also a coat of pale stone-colour all round the inside of her low bulwarks, as well as a touch of varnish on the teak and mahogany-fittings of the deck.

This left me free to assist Bob in the afternoon, and such good progress did we make that by sunset the rigging had been overhauled and lifted, the masthead examined in the eyes of the rigging, new service put on where required, and everything got back into its place again, the lanyards all set up, and the mainsail rebent, which it badly required.

We then had a good wash and adjourned to the shore, where we found our fair companion awaiting us with tea all ready, and a collection of

most beautiful shells to exhibit, the fruits of her day's gathering. As soon as the meal was over, everything was transported on board again, and put in its place ; and I then rejoined Ella, who remained on shore, and we had a very enjoyable ramble, enlivened with such conversation as lovers delight in.

The next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we all adjourned to the shore once more ; and whilst Ella, at my recommendation, took another stroll about the island, Bob and I set to work upon the oysters. They were all dead by this time, of course, and not only so, but in such a condition that it taxed our resolution to the utmost to go through with the task about which we had set ourselves.

But what will man not do for the sake of wealth ? It is true, we both felt sanguine about finding our treasure-island ; and if the account we had received of it was true, there was more wealth there than we had the means of taking away with us ; still we could not resist the temptation to secure this, comparatively speaking, small windfall that had come in our way, so we per-

severed; and we certainly had no reason to be dissatisfied with our reward.

When all was over we found that our acquisition amounted to about a quart-measure full of seed-pearls, and a similar measure full of pearls of a large size, ranging from the size of peas to, in one instance, a splendid fellow fully as large as a pigeon's egg, many others being nearly as fine.

This task occupied us all the morning, and when it was finished we returned to the cutter, and at once set about taking our boat to pieces and stowing her away below.

This done, we took dinner, immediately after which Bob and I got the canvas set, hove up our anchor, and stood away for the western passage through the reef.

This passage was much wider than the one by which we had entered, and not nearly so crooked; and as we were just within the influence of the trade-winds, and it trended generally in a westerly direction, we had a fair wind through, so we had no difficulty whatever in passing out between the reefs, which we did

under easy sail ; getting the gaff-topsail and spinnaker upon the craft, however, as soon as we were fairly outside.

The wind was blowing fresh, but steady, from about south-east, and as our course was west-north-west, we flew merrily away very nearly dead before the wind, with our spinnaker boomed out to port.

Bob took the afternoon watch, and I retired below and lay down, as it was my eight hours out that night.

Ella remained on deck chatting gaily with Bob, and busying herself with some mysterious bit of sewing, and I soon dropped off into a doze.

Nothing of importance occurred for the remainder of that day, nor during the next.

Ella now regularly kept the first night-watch with me, whenever it was my eight hours out, and many a pleasant chat did we have together ; and more and more reason did I see for congratulating myself upon my choice of a bride, hasty as that choice had been.

Now that we had had an explanation, and there no longer existed any reason for the fair

girl's concealing her ardent attachment to me, many little puzzling peculiarities and contradictions, which I had before observed in her conduct, disappeared ; and I found her society more charming and her conversation more frank and enjoyable every day.

There was not a particle of coquettishness, or nonsense of any kind about her, and she made no hesitation whatever about acknowledging, frankly yet modestly, the warmth of her affection.

She questioned me eagerly, and with the utmost interest, about my father ; and I saw with delight that there was already springing up within her breast a feeling of regard for him, simply *because* he happened to be my father, which promised, with but a little encouragement, to blossom into deep affection.

In the prospect of finding the treasure she also exhibited an interest, but it was nothing in comparison with the other.

On one occasion, for example, when in speaking of it, I endeavoured to explain to her that there was no absolute *certainty* of our being able to

find it, and that if we failed I should be compelled of necessity to return to my own profession as a means of support, she replied, "Well, Harry, dear, I really *do* hope you *will* find it, for it would be very hard to have you away from me for many months at a time, or indeed at all; but I could reconcile myself to that if we only happen to be fortunate enough to find your dear father, so that I might have the satisfaction of knowing that when my darling was absent from me, he would be with a beloved parent."

She was not at all insensible to the advantages of wealth; but I could see, in many little ways, that she was quite sincere in the statement she often made, that she would willingly sacrifice our chances of securing the gold for the certainty of discovering my father.

When I went on deck at seven-bells, in answer to Bob's call, on the morning but one succeeding the day of our departure from the island, I found that the wind had dropped almost to a dead calm, the *Lily* making no more than about three knots; and that there was a heavy sultry

feeling in the air, quite different from the usual freshness of the sea breeze. A thin and almost impalpable vapour was spread over the entire firmament, like a curtain, and away to the eastward a heavy bank of dark menacing cloud was slowly rising above the horizon.

A glance at the aneroid, which was fixed in the companion-way, so as to be visible to the helmsman, revealed the fact that the pointer of the instrument had gone considerably back ; and this, together with the threatening aspect of the heavens, made me fear that we were about to have a very unpleasant break in the fine weather we had been favoured with since entering the Pacific.

"I don't like the looks of things, Harry," said Bob, as I glanced round at the aspect of our surroundings ; "that glass there has gone back a good inch within the hour, and this light-flying stuff overhead has sprung from Lord knows where within the last ten minutes ; and that bank down yonder seems to me to be working about in a way that's altogether onaccountable, and looks very much as though 'twas breeding mischief.

I'd ha' called ye before, lad, but it's only within these ten minutes that there's been anything out of the way about the look of the weather."

"It has a threatening look about it, certainly," I replied, "and we will not waste a moment in getting the canvas off the craft, and in making her snug for whatever may befall. Leave the tiller to take care of itself, Bob, and in with the gaff-topsail, whilst I hand the spinnaker. Never mind about rolling them up; we can do that by-and-by, if we have time. So; that's well. Now settle away the peak halliards, or—here, let me have them, and I will lower away both peak and throat, whilst you gather in the sail. Now roll it snugly up, and stow it securely, and put the cover on, whilst I get in the jib and lower the topmast. Be as lively as you like, Bob; we shall have none too much time, by the look of things astern. Now we may yet roll up these sails and get them out of the way below, if we are smart. You do that, whilst I close-reef the fore-sail. I hope that whatever is coming will not last long; for we are in rather an ugly berth here among so many islands, and it may not be an

easy matter to avoid them if we are obliged to scud, as I expect we shall be."

We worked with a will, and in a quarter of an hour had the craft stripped, with the exception of a close-reefed foresail, and her topmast lowered. All the time that we were working, the heavy bank astern had been rising and spreading itself over the heavens like a dark canopy, the vast mass of vapour of which it was composed writhing and twisting like the contortions of a wounded snake; and by the time that our preparations were complete, the entire sky was overspread, with the exception of a low strip away on the western horizon, which was rapidly lessening, even as we looked upon it.

The interposition of this vast curtain of vapour between us and the sky caused an awful semi-darkness to fall upon the scene, and this was still further increased by the presence of a kind of smoky mist, which now filled the air, rendering everything so obscure that it was difficult to see further than a mile on either side.

Ella now came upon deck to announce that breakfast was ready, but we had something else

to occupy our attention just then; and the fair girl placed her arm in mine, and gazed with us in silence at the awe-inspiring scene.

The wind had died away altogether, but the inky sea exhibited a singular and alarming appearance, leaping into low waves which had no run in any direction, and which presented more the appearance of what we see on the surface of a simmering caldron than anything else to which I can compare it.

Suddenly a blinding flash of lightning rent the canopy overhead, and simultaneously came the cracking, rattling crash of the thunder. I directed Ella to retire below, and not to attempt returning to the deck unless I called her, advising her also to get her breakfast at once, and clear everything away, if she wished to save the crockery, as I expected we should soon have more of both wind and sea than we wanted.

I then closed the cabin doors and drew over the slide, and well it was that I did so; for at that moment there came another flash, another deafening, stunning peal, and then the floodgates of heaven were opened, and the rain descended in

such blinding sheets that our deck was in less than a minute full to the low rail, notwithstanding that there was an inch of clear space all round the craft, between bulwarks and covering-board, to enable her to free herself rapidly of water.

This lasted perhaps five minutes, and then the rain ceased as suddenly as it had come on. It was, to compare great things with small, like the emptying of a bucket of water. It was a deluge whilst it lasted, and it ceased as suddenly as would the shower from a bucket when its contents had all fallen to the ground.

Another minute or two of suspense succeeded, and then a pale, primrose-coloured streak appeared on the horizon to the eastward, rapidly increasing in size, and a hollow moaning sound gradually became audible in the air. I did not like it at all. I was sure something out of the common was about to happen, and I desired Bob to go forward and haul down the foresail, and stow it.

He had just done this, and was coming aft again, when he sung out, "Here it comes at last, Harry; stand by the tiller." I looked, and away

astern, right and left, far as the eye could reach, was a rapidly advancing and widening streak of white foam. On it came, outstripping in speed the fastest express train, the sea in front of it inky black, whilst behind it was all as white as milk. I sat down on deck, bracing my feet against the companion, and desired Bob to do the same ; and it was well we did so, or I verily believe we should have been blown overboard.

The hurricane struck us fairly astern, and I fully expected to see the mast go clean out of the cutter, whilst the foam boiled up over the taffrail and surged inboard, filling our decks, and piling over us in a truly alarming manner. However, our rigging was all first-rate, and stood the tremendous strain bravely ; and, the laws of nature asserting their supremacy even in this wild scene, the little *Lily* rose and shook herself clear of the water which had swept in over her, and then away she flew, at a perfectly frightful speed, dead before it.

Had she been of the usual model, her bows would have been forced under by the enormous pressure of the wind behind, and she would have

gone down head foremost ; but, sharp as were her water-lines, her bows curved boldly out above water, and thus afforded her a support forward, which now proved her salvation.

The first fierceness of the gust lasted perhaps five minutes, possibly not so much, but it is difficult to measure time on such occasions as these, and then we got the strength of the gale proper. I thought it blew pretty hard off Cape Horn, but it was a trifle compared with this.

The sea remained perfectly smooth, for the simple reason that it *could not* get up. The tops of the surges, as they rose, were taken by the wind and swept off as neatly as you would cut a flower from its stalk with a riding-switch ; and the air was filled completely with this scud water, rendering it so thick that it was impossible to see a cable's length ahead.

As all immediate danger was for the present over, I now desired Bob to push back the companion slide, leaving the doors still closed however, and go below and get a mouthful of something to eat, as I did not know what call

might yet be made upon our energies, and it was desirable that we should not allow ourselves to become exhausted from want of food.

As soon as he had snatched a hasty meal, he relieved me, and I went below in my turn, when I found that Ella had contrived to keep some coffee hot for us, as well as a supply of the cakes or rolls which she was so fond of making; and the dear girl, pale and terrified as she was, took her place at the table, attending to my wants with true womanly assiduity and self-forgetfulness.

She earnestly entreated to be allowed to accompany me on deck, and share whatever danger there might be, but this of course I would not allow, asserting, a little ungallantly, I fear, that she could do no good there, and would only be in the way. I gave her permission, however, to stand in the companion-way and look abroad upon the strange scene, providing that she wrapped herself well up, and put on my macintosh to prevent becoming wet through, and this concession she gratefully accepted.

Hour after hour we flew before the fury of the gale, my anxiety increasing with every mile that we travelled, for my chart told me that a group of islands lay directly ahead as we were then steering; and I knew, by my reckoning, that we must be drawing fearfully close to them, if indeed we were not already actually among them.

The wind had moderated, to a certain extent, from its first terrific violence, but it was still blowing far too hard to permit of our rounding-to, and making use of our floating-anchor; any attempt to do so must inevitably have resulted in the craft "turning the turtle" with us, and I had, therefore, no choice but to keep scudding.

The sea began to get up, too, now, and followed us in a very menacing manner, the huge foaming crests rearing high above our taffrail, and threatening every moment to fall on board. So great did this danger at last become, that I reluctantly directed Bob to go forward and get the foresail (which I had close-reefed before it was stowed) upon the craft.

This, in such weather, and with only one hand to do the work, promised to be a task of no ordinary difficulty; but Bob was the man to do it if any one could, and he set about the work with all the care and skill of which he was master.

I sheered the cutter about one point to port to keep the sail steadily drawing; and, the sheets being carefully trimmed, the old fellow took the halliards in one hand, knelt down upon the sail, and cast off the stops by which it was secured. He then steadied the halliards taut, sprang to the weather-side of the deck, and swayed away, catching a turn under a belaying pin the moment the sail was up.

It almost set itself, and by Bob's careful management it was filled and drawing without a single flap, which would at that moment have insured its destruction.

The effect of the exhibition of this mere shred of canvas was such a material acceleration of speed that we were no longer in any great danger of being "pooped;" but, on the other hand, we were now rushing with the greater impetuosity

down upon the dangers which, I had too much reason to fear, awaited us ahead.

Indeed, I had abundant confirmation of these fears within the next half hour, for we soon afterwards dashed past an extensive reef—over which the sea boiled and seethed with terrific violence—at so short a distance that, but for our slight alteration of course when the foresail was set, we must have plunged headlong upon it. To add to my anxiety, it still continued thick as ever, rendering it utterly impossible to see above a cable's length, or two at the utmost, on any side of us.

So anxious did I at last become, that I was on the point of resigning the helm to Bob, that I might go below to consult the chart, and ascertain as nearly as I could our exact position, when suddenly, directly ahead, appeared a wild waste of boiling foaming surf, swirling, seething, and leaping high in the air, where it became instantly dissipated in the form of a dense driving mist.

I glanced wildly to port and to starboard, vainly hoping I should see clear unbroken water

on one side or the other, though we were already too near the breakers to escape them. But far as the eye could penetrate the dense atmosphere on either side, stretched the remorseless breakers, and in another minute we were among them.

On first catching sight of the broken water, I had pointed to the companion in which Ella still stood; and Bob, seeing the action, caught my meaning in a moment, and with rather scant ceremony, thrust the poor little girl's head below and drew the slide close over.

At the same instant I thought I detected a spot where the sea was breaking somewhat less madly than elsewhere, and I gave the cutter a strong sheer to starboard, that we might enter the surf at that point, it being my opinion that there lay the deepest water.

I had no hope of escaping, but the instinct of self-preservation asserted itself, as it always will, and prompted me to avail myself of even the slenderest and most doubtful chance in our favour.

The cutter heeled violently down, burying her

lee gunwale half-deck high in the seething water, and I thought for a moment that she was going over altogether with us ; the foresail jibed with a loud flap, and blew clear and clean out of the bolt-rope, and at the same instant the *Water Lily* plunged wildly into the boiling surf.

I braced myself for the shock which I expected would instantly follow, accompanied by the crashing in of the poor little craft's timbers, but she did not touch.

The water tumbled on board forward, aft, everywhere, and Bob and I were frequently standing waist deep ; and still the cutter rushed furiously on, all my efforts and energies now being directed to keeping as much as possible in those parts where the sea broke with least violence.

After the first half-minute or so, finding that we did not strike, hope faintly revived within me, especially as the cutter suddenly shot into a belt of unbroken water.

Down this channel we rushed, sheering now to port, now to starboard, as we followed its wind-

ings, the water becoming smoother with every fathom we proceeded.

I began to hope that our troubles were coming to an end, when suddenly the channel took a quick bend to windward, and without sail upon the boat it became impossible to follow it.

Selecting, as before, that part where the surf broke least heavily, I was fain therefore once again to let the little *Lily* drive into the white water, and the next moment we touched, though but lightly.

Another perilous quarter of a mile was run, and then, the air being rather clearer, I saw, some distance ahead, beyond the now much reduced surf, clear water again; but there was an unbroken barrier of foam between us and it, and from its appearance I greatly feared that the reef rose everywhere in that direction dangerously near to the surface.

There was not much to choose in the way of a course just then, so I steered for the nearest point of the new channel, and was just congratulating myself that we should reach it without touching again, when we plunged into the thickest

of the foam, struck heavily, and sheered broadside to, heeling over so violently that Bob lost his footing and his hold together, and fell into the sea to leeward.

The main-sheet was lying coiled upon the deck under my hand, and I threw it over to him bodily. He fortunately caught it, and, exerting his utmost strength, succeeded in clambering on board again.

As he did so, a huge roller came foaming and tumbling towards us, striking our upturned side so violently that it hove us fairly over on our beam-ends, whilst it lifted us clear of the ledge to which we had hung, and launched us into the unbroken water to leeward.

Once clear of the ledge, the little craft instantly righted, and I put the helm hard up. We soon paid off, and swept away to leeward once more; but we were now in a good broad channel, with comparatively smooth water, and I saw, with satisfaction, that the surf on each side of us was becoming less and less heavy every minute.

Five minutes might have elapsed perhaps after we last struck, when I saw land looming

through the haze ahead, and soon afterwards we found ourselves clear of the reefs altogether—inside of them, that is—and floating on the comparatively smooth surface of an extensive lagoon.

High land now distinctly appeared ahead of us, and we shortly discovered that it formed a portion of an island of considerable size, the northern end of which lay about three points on our starboard bow.

Towards this point I at once directed the head of the cutter, with the object of getting under a lee as quickly as possible, and, if practicable, into a berth which would permit of our careening our poor little craft and examining into the extent of her damage. I directed Bob to open the companion now, as I was fearful that Ella might have received some injury when the cutter was hove on her beam-ends; but, to my great joy, as soon as the doors were thrown back, there she was, clinging desperately to the ladder, terribly frightened, but unhurt, as she assured me, beyond a few unimportant bruises.

As we neared the northern extremity of the

island, towards which I was steering, we found that it terminated in an almost perpendicular cliff of some fifty or sixty feet in height, constituting the northern part of the base of a high hill, rising almost to the dignity of a mountain, which was thickly wooded almost to its summit, and to the very verge of the cliffs, close under which we were now gliding swiftly along.

As my eye ranged over the northern face of these cliffs, which we had by this time opened, I detected a rather singular break in them at a particular point; and, curiosity prompting me, I sheered the cutter a little closer to get a nearer view of it.

Approaching still nearer, it seemed to me that this break extended quite to the water's edge; but it was not until we were almost past it that I felt convinced not only that this was the case, but that there actually was a bay or cove of some sort inside it.

This discovery was made barely in time to enable me to jam my helm hard-a-starboard and just fetch the opening, through which in about five minutes afterwards we gently slid, finding

ourselves in the midst of a deep basin of almost perfect circular form, so completely landlocked and with such a narrow and artfully-concealed entrance that it was not until we were within a biscuit-throw of the rocks that I felt absolutely certain there really existed a passage at all.

The basin, as I have already said, was of circular form, and I judged it to be about a mile in diameter. The entrance was at the most northerly point in its circumference ; at which spot, as I afterwards ascertained by sounding, there was nearly forty fathoms of water, though the horns or cusps of the encircling cliffs approached each other so closely that it would have been impossible to take even a small square-rigged vessel through without bracing her yards sharp fore and aft, and a craft of say a couple of hundred tons could not have been carried through at all.

At the entrance the cliffs rose almost perpendicularly out of the water, both outside and inside, terminating in a wedge on either side.

From this point, however, they gradually widened away in the form of a gently-rising

plateau, out of which two spurs of the mountain sprang, one on each side of the basin.

Between these spurs or shoulders lay a ravine, which sloped evenly down from the level of the plateau on each side until it terminated, at the southern extremity of the basin, in a beach of fine sand. This ravine lay, of course, directly ahead of us as we entered; and its smooth, lawn-like surface, swelling gradually upwards towards the mountain in the rear and the plateaus on each side, formed a truly lovely picture under any circumstances, and especially to us who had, within the last hour, been battling with a stormy sea.

Its central portion, for perhaps a mile in length and a quarter of that width, was luxuriantly clothed with the freshest verdure, but was quite destitute of trees.

Beyond these limits, however, the whole face of the country was thickly wooded, cocoa-nuts and bananas being conspicuously abundant. The beach ran about three-fourths round the basin, being broadest immediately in front of the ravine

and gradually narrowing away to nothing at about a mile's distance on either side.

At the western extremity of the beach a beautiful cascade tumbled over the edge of the cliff upon a low rocky platform below, from whence it dispersed itself into the sea.

I took the glass, and carefully swept the entire ravine with it to ascertain whether there were any indications that the island was inhabited, for I felt convinced that were it so this lovely spot would be the first selected as a place of abode. But for all that I could see no human foot had ever pressed the soil, and I felt encouraged to go close in and anchor ; though, before doing anything else, I determined to make a voyage of discovery inland, and settle the question as to the existence or non-existence of inhabitants.

If it should really prove that we had this lovely island all to ourselves, nothing could possibly be better suited to our purpose of careening the cutter : for I found, by repeated casts of the lead, that the water shoaled with almost mathematical regularity as we approached the beach.

On shooting through the narrow entrance we

had found ourselves almost becalmed under the lofty cliffs, though the gale still howled overhead: so, having made up my mind as to the berth in which I would place the cutter, I desired Bob to get the jib on her, and under this short canvas we slid quietly across the basin to our anchorage, bringing up in three fathoms.

We immediately got our boat out and put her together; and, as soon as she was ready, I took a double-barrelled shot-gun, and got Bob to put me ashore, leaving him to take care of Ella and the cutter, and telling him that in the event of anything transpiring to render his assistance necessary I would fire both barrels quickly one after the other, and not otherwise.

If a distant view of the country was attractive, it was, upon a closer inspection, perfectly enchanting, everything having the appearance rather of the happiest effects of landscape-gardening than of an unaided effort of nature. The ground, which from a distance appeared almost too regular for perfect beauty, I found to be finely broken; and on each side, as I walked up the ravine, were

constantly recurring elevations and declivities, ornamented with fine clumps of tropical trees.

Besides the cocoa-nuts and bananas, I found plantains, figs, bread-fruit, pine-apples, superior in size and flavour to any that I had ever before met with, and a large variety of other fruits with the names and qualities of which I was unacquainted.

Innumerable birds of the most beautiful plumage sported among the trees, and a few of them sang very sweetly, but for the most part the sounds which they emitted were quite unlike any that I had heard before.

I saw no traces of animals or reptiles, great or small ; and none whatever of man.

I walked quite to the head of the ravine, and then turned off to the right, with the object of passing round the base of the mountain ; but, after an hour's walk, I found that I had my labour for my pains, for I came out upon the edge of the cliff on the north-western side of the island, and now discovered that at that spot it not only extended for some distance to the southward, but swept round the northern base of the mountain inland,

rising sheer like a wall for quite a hundred feet. After searching unavailingly for some time for a point at which it might be possible for me to pass, I was obliged to give it up and retrace my steps.

Reaching the head of the ravine once more, I now struck off to the left with the intention of passing round to the eastward. Another walk of about an hour, during which my progress was much impeded, as it had been on the opposite side, by the dense undergrowth, and I came out upon a small platform on the extreme eastern side of the mountain. This platform terminated on my left at the edge of the cliff, and ahead it gradually narrowed until there was barely room for a man to pass, and not then unless he had remarkably steady nerves: for on the right rose a perpendicular precipice, and on the left was the cliff-edge, with the lagoon nearly two hundred feet below. From my present position I was now able to see that this ledge was the only available point of passage from the northern to the southern side of the island unless one chose fairly to scale the mountain, which I was con-

vinced would be a work of considerable difficulty, on account of the thickness of the bush or undergrowth.

Along this narrow ledge, then, I proceeded to take my way; and, after a perilous journey of half a mile, came out upon safe ground once more. Half an hour afterwards I reached the southern side of the island, and clambering with considerable difficulty to the top of a precipitous knoll, I obtained an uninterrupted view of the whole southern side of the island. It extended from the point upon which I stood a distance of quite twelve miles, running nearly due north and south, and was divided pretty evenly by a ridge or spur of the mountain, which passed down its entire length.

The island varied considerably in width, being irregularly shaped somewhat like a diamond or lozenge, with numerous bays and creeks on its western side, but none whatever on the east. It was well wooded throughout, and presented a magnificent park-like appearance.

I had brought my most powerful glass with me, and from the commanding elevation upon which I

stood, I now carefully swept the entire island as far as the range of my glass permitted, but without detecting the slightest trace of inhabitants.

Greatly gratified at the perfect security which this promised, I now retraced my steps, as the sun, which had burst through the clouds, was by this time approaching the horizon; and in about a couple of hours I found myself once more on board the cutter, where I was joyously welcomed by my companions, who had both begun to feel very uneasy at my prolonged absence.

Of course I did not fail to take back with me a plentiful supply of fruit, upon which we regaled ourselves luxuriously after a late dinner, during which I gave a detailed report of my explorations.

So satisfactory was this, that my companions were both delighted when I announced my intention of remaining there for a sufficient length of time to careen and examine the cutter; and as this would of course necessitate the taking of everything movable out of her, it was ar-

ranged that we should commence our work next morning by rigging up a couple of tents on shore, in which to take up our quarters until the cutter was once more ready to receive us.

CHAPTER V.

ATTACKED BY SAVAGES.

WHEN I awoke next morning the sun was just appearing above the cliffs which bounded our basin on its eastern side, the sky was cloudless, and the trade-wind had once more resumed its supremacy, sweeping in a gentle breeze over the tree-crowned summits of the cliffs, though down in the basin we only felt the mildest zephyr.

Calling Bob, who was still sound asleep, I proceeded to the deck to enjoy the balmy freshness of the morning and await his appearance; and as soon as he joined me we both jumped into the boat, armed with soap and towel, and directed our steps to the cascade, which was

hidden from our present berth by a slight projection of the face of the intervening cliff.

When we arrived at the spot we found that instead of falling sheer from the top of the cliff to the bottom, as it appeared from the basin to do, it was arrested at several points in its fall, by which the force of the descending water was so much broken that I thought we might safely venture to place ourselves beneath it, and thus obtain a most magnificent shower-bath.

The rock upon which it fell had gradually been hollowed away by the action of the descending water, and presented the appearance of a gigantic shallow bowl, of nearly thirty feet in diameter, brim-full of the purest crystal water, which gushed away over the western or lower edge into the sea. The depth varied regularly from a few inches round the edge to about three feet immediately under the cascade, and the whole formed a most princely bath.

We lost no time in stripping and plunging in, when, after indulging in a thorough ablution, I ventured upon the shower experiment. The shock was tremendous, and as much as ever I

could bear ; but its after effects were delicious. I felt braced and strengthened, refreshed, and ready for anything ; but more especially for a good breakfast, which of course we found awaiting us in due course when we returned to the cutter.

As soon as the meal was over Ella packed up the washing she was so anxious about, and I put her and Bob ashore, the latter trudging happily along by the side of his light-hearted companion, and bearing her bundle on his shoulder. I then returned to the cutter, hove up the anchor, and ran her in under her jib, until she gently took the ground, when I set about mooring her stem and stern to the beach with warps made fast to stakes firmly driven into the sand.

Bob soon returned, and we then unbent the mainsail, struck the topmast, cast adrift the boom and gaff, and ran in the bowsprit and unrigged it ; and, then, transporting these spars and all our sails to the beach, we rigged up a couple of small but comfortable enough tents, into which we transferred our several belongings, and such

necessaries as we expected we should require during our short experiment in camp life. We at the same time availed ourselves of so fine an opportunity as was now afforded us, to thoroughly air our spare suit of sails.

It took up the entire day to clear the cutter of everything, ballast included; and, even then, we were compelled to leave our large water-tank on board, from sheer inability to get it out of the craft without breaking up her deck, which, of course, we could not think of doing.

We succeeded, however, after a great deal of difficulty and trouble, in shoring it firmly up close to the deck beams (having first of all, of course, pumped all the water out); and this left us sufficient room to get at the ballast, though with none to spare.

With everything out of her, the cutter floated a good three feet lighter, and we at once hauled her in as close to the shore as she would come, so as to work at her, if need be, without the boat, simply standing in the water.

The next morning we ran our anchor the necessary distance away out to seaward, broad

upon our starboard beam, brought the cable on board, and hooked it to the throat halyards, taking a good look, first of all, to our shore fasts.

It was easy work heaving her down for the first half-hour; but as soon as we got her fairly down upon her bilge, we obtained an idea of how stiff the little craft was, even without an ounce of ballast in her.

We hove and hove until everything cracked again; and I really was afraid at one time that we should either spring the mast or carry its head away altogether, but we succeeded at last in getting her past the point of greatest resistance, without meeting with any casualty, and after that she came down pretty easily.

An hour and a half of hard work saw us, at length, with the cutter keel out, and an anxious scrutiny of her bottom immediately followed.

To our intense satisfaction, we now saw that she had struck, on both occasions, on that portion of her keel which was loaded with lead, two dints in the metal being distinctly visible. One was very trifling; the other was a jagged notch of

some five inches in depth, the lead being bent upwards and outwards to starboard in a kind of lip.

Beyond these there were no other injuries even of the slightest kind visible, at least on the port side, and the copper was as unwrinkled as the day it was put on.

Half-an-hour's work with the hammer put the keel completely to rights again; and whilst I busied myself about this, Bob employed himself in diligently scouring the copper, and would not be satisfied until he had made it almost as bright as gold.

I had very great hopes that we should find the starboard side in an equally undamaged condition; but we determined, whilst we were about it, to make our overhaul complete, so, as soon as dinner was over, we swung the craft, and hove her down again, and soon had the gratification of finding our hopes confirmed.

The copper on the starboard side, of course, received its due share of scouring, for the sake of uniformity; and about an hour before sunset, the tackles were eased up, and the little craft

floated on an even keel once more, with her slight damages made good, and everything in as perfect condition (the ordinary wear and tear excepted) as when she came out of the builders' hands.

The next day was devoted to a thorough cleansing of the little craft's interior, fore and aft, so favourable an opportunity not being likely to offer again until after our return to England, unless, indeed, we really should prove fortunate enough to find our treasure; but she required it even now, so we gave it her, finishing off with a coat of paint.

Before leaving her for the night, we unscrewed all the dead-lights in the deck, took off the skylight-top, and left the companion wide open, so as to ensure a thorough draught through her, this answering the double purpose of drying the paint and removing its objectionable odour.

The following day saw us as busy as ever, getting things back into their places, filling up our water, etc.; but we did not strike our tents that day, a stronger smell than was quite agreeable still remaining from the new paint.

To fill up our time, therefore, we turned to upon our fire-arms, and gave them a thorough cleaning up, so that they might be in perfect order, and ready for service at a moment's notice.

We were up betimes next morning ; and, after our matutinal bath and a good breakfast, dowsed the tents, got our spars on board and in their places, bent the sails, and put the few finishing touches which were necessary to make the cutter all ready for sea once more.

This done, it was time to see about finding a way out from among the numerous reefs which girt the island, as we believed, entirely round.

We had come through, or, rather, over them once, it is true, but it was in a fashion that I should have been very sorry to see repeated ; and on that occasion we had no choice ; but as I had no fancy for the little craft's again *scraping* such rude acquaintance with the rocks, I resolved to take the boat and make a trip in her along the western side of the island, in search of a safe channel to sea.

Accordingly, Bob and I got the light spars and

sails of the boat out, rigged and stepped the former, bent the latter, and then we all sat down to an early dinner.

It was my original intention to have gone away alone, but Ella begged so hard to be allowed to come with me that I had not the heart to refuse her, especially as there was no sufficient reason for so doing. So I consented, promising her that after our exploration was over, if time permitted, she should have a ramble on shore on the southern side of the mountain, when we would lay in a sea-stock of fruit at the same time.

Bob said he would accompany us, and try his luck with the fishing-lines, whilst Ella and I took our proposed stroll ; and to this also there seemed no objection, as the cutter was in a berth where the hardest gale that ever blew could not have endangered her safety in the slightest degree.

Accordingly, as soon as the meal was over, we shoved off, some instinct prompting me, at the last moment, to take one of our revolving rifles and a small supply of cartridges with me. We soon slid out of the cove, and shortly after-

wards rounded the north-western extremity of the island.

This was the first trial of our *sliding-gunter* mainsail upon our singularly-constructed boat ; and Bob and I were thrown into perfect raptures at the truly marvellous speed with which it propelled the craft along. The *Water Lily* was wonderfully fast ; but in smooth water and light winds, her boat would have sailed round and round her.

We skimmed rapidly along the edge of the western reef, and when we had run about four miles to the southward, found a good wide break, which looked as though it led out to sea. I up with the helm at once, and away we darted almost dead before the wind, down through it.

It was rather a circumbendibus sort of affair, and somewhat narrow in places, though everywhere there was sufficient room to work the *Lily* in ; and after a run of about half an hour, we shot out between two overhanging ledges, the extremities of which showed about six feet above water, and found ourselves rising and

falling on the long swell of the open ocean.

So far, so good, and we now have about to retrace our steps, I noticing, as we passed in between the two ledges I have mentioned, that the rock, instead of being of coral formation, appeared to be composed of a lava-like substance ; and I then became confirmed in an impression, which had crossed my mind once or twice before, that this island was certainly of volcanic origin, and that the mountain had once been the crater of an active volcano.

And the conformation of the summit seemed also to suggest this, for it did not taper away to a cone, but appeared to form a flat table-land of some extent ; this, however, might perhaps have proved on inspection to be hollow, the flat appearance of the top resulting merely from regularity in the height of the crater walls.

In about an hour after re-entering the passage through the reef, our boat grounded gently on the beach, on the western side of the island. I leaped ashore, and assisted Ella to land, desiring Bob, as I shoved the boat off into deep water

again, to meet us in the bay which I expected he would find behind a low headland which lay about three miles to the southward of us.

Ella took possession of my arm now, quite as a matter of course, without waiting for me to offer its support, and together we sauntered leisurely along in the grateful shade of the trees and giant plants with which we were surrounded.

For the first half hour or so, we had eyes for nothing but the varied beauties of nature which lay spread before us in such luxuriant prodigality.

The forms of the trees and plants were, for the most part, new to us, but all were beautiful; and the occasional glimpses of scenery which presented themselves through unexpected avenues, made glorious by the adornment of all these varied forms and colours in foliage and flowers, and enlivened by the presence of thousands of birds of brilliant plumage, darting through the air like living gems, seemed like an absolute realisation of fairy-land or Eden.

Time passed swiftly away with us in the enjoy-

ment of so much loveliness, especially as we made frequent pauses to admire at our leisure some more than usually bewitching scene; and I was in the act of remarking to my companion that Bob would certainly think we were lost in the woods, when she exclaimed in a startled voice :

“Oh, Harry ! there is an animal of some sort following us. I have noticed the bushes moving rather strangely behind us once or twice already, but I did not like to say anything, fearing you would think me foolish and nervous; but this instant I distinctly saw a dark object glide swiftly behind that large aloe-like shrub with the beautiful purple blossoms, that we stood admiring so long.”

“An animal ?” I exclaimed. “Impossible, darling ; you must surely be mistaken. No animals are likely to be on an island like this. How could they ever have come here, unless provided with wings ?”

“That I cannot say,” she replied ; “but I am convinced I was not mistaken.”

“Stay here a moment then,” said I ; “I will

go back and see whether any creature really *is* lurking there, as you seem to think."

"Oh no, Harry, dear! please do not," she exclaimed; "I feel so dreadfully nervous, though I know it is very foolish. But it has startled me, and I shall not feel at ease again until we are in the boat. Let us hasten forward as rapidly as possible, please, for I cannot enjoy the walk any longer."

"Come, then," said I, "we will go on at once; and since this animal is behind us, you had better walk on a pace or two ahead of me."

We now stepped briskly forward, my companion evidently suffering from a violent attack of nervous agitation.

I did not believe she had seen anything, and imputed her feeling to the rather depressing sense of solitude which one is sometimes apt to experience when wandering in a thickly-wooded locality. Nevertheless, I took the precaution to glance at my rifle, and satisfy myself that all its chambers were loaded, and also to verify the locality of my cartridges.

We had proceeded in this way perhaps five

minutes, and had just emerged from among the trees upon an open lawn-like level of green sward which sloped gently to the beach, there about half a mile distant, when something hissed close past me ; and the next moment I saw an arrow quivering in the earth, a few yards beyond.

“ Savages ! ” I exclaimed, and I felt my blood curdle and my heart sink like lead for a moment, as I realised the dreadful nature of the danger to which my poor little darling was thus suddenly exposed.

I turned abruptly, but could see no sign of a living creature near ; and, with such cheering words as I could find for the moment, I urged Ella to hasten her steps towards the open, where I should be upon more even terms with the enemy.

Poor child ! she needed no urging ; she would have taken to headlong flight had I not restrained her : for I felt certain that such an action would immediately be followed by a perfect shower of arrows were the savages in force.

We had not advanced half a dozen yards before I felt a sharp stinging sensation in my left arm ;

it was pierced by an arrow. I looked round again, but the foe remained invisible, and there was nothing for it but to push on. The next instant three or four more long slender shafts hissed past us, confirming my fears and increasing my apprehensions for my companion's safety.

She saw that I was wounded, and would have stopped to render me assistance, but time was valuable now, and moments as precious as years would be under other circumstances : so I only urged her to press forward as fast as she could without actually running.

On we sped, and again came another flight of arrows, one of which pierced me in the fleshy part of the thigh, whilst two passed through Ella's flowing skirts, but happily without doing the dear girl any injury.

I suffered a few moments to elapse, and then suddenly faced about, bringing my rifle to my shoulder as I did so ; and there, in the centre of the path between the trees, which we had just quitted, knelt a savage upon one knee, in the act of drawing his bow.

I was always very fond of shooting, and had

acquired the reputation of being a good snap-shot among the rabbits, and my skill now stood me in good stead.

The kneeling figure was instantly covered ; I pulled the trigger, and he leapt convulsively to his feet, staggered forward, and fell upon his face. I had no sooner fired than some twenty natives sprang from their cover, and ran towards us. They seemed, I thought, to have seen fire-arms before, for their advance was made with the confidence of those who know that their enemy has just emptied his piece ; but they were about to make the acquaintance of a new and terrible weapon, of the properties of which they were doubtless hitherto ignorant.

Levelling again, I fired at the foremost, and then quickly turned my piece upon one close beside him. The reports rang out sharp and clear one close upon the other, and both the savages fell. Their companions paused an instant in evident surprise ; and that pause proved a serious, if not fatal, matter to a fourth, whom I immediately afterwards brought down.

This was too much for them. They saw that

to stand exposed to view was to court death, and with a yell of disappointed rage, they sprang back into cover.

I instantly profited by this retrograde movement on the part of the enemy to make a push for the beach, hoping that Bob would hear the rifle-shots (especially the double report, which I had arranged with him on a former occasion should be a signal of warning or a call for assistance), and hasten to the rendezvous which was now clearly within sight, or would be as soon as uncovered by an extensive screen of bush which lay a couple of hundred yards on our right.

I also reloaded with all dispatch the emptied chambers of my rifle, with which I hoped to be able to keep the savages at bay until we were fairly afloat once more.

But the fight was by no means over yet, for we had not gone far when a shower of at least thirty arrows flew about us from a point on our left, showing that the savages were following us up under cover, evidently with the intention of heading us, if possible.

I was wounded thrice by this discharge: one

arrow sticking in the back of my neck, and causing me the greatest uneasiness, a second lodging in my left shoulder, and a third completely piercing the calf of my leg. I succeeded in removing some of these annoyances by thrusting them right through the flesh, breaking off the heads, and drawing out the broken shafts; but those in my neck and shoulder were firmly imbedded in the muscles, and I found I could not remove them without some sort of surgical assistance.

Ella had fortunately escaped again, and as soon as I had rid myself as far as I could of the arrows, we pressed on once more, I keeping as much between my companion and the cover of the foe as was possible. The poor girl was nearly fainting with terror, but she made a brave effort to keep up her spirits, and really behaved wonderfully well.

There was now a pause of a minute or two in the attack, and this enabled us to reach a point where we were not only nearly out of range of the arrows, but where we were also enabled to get a clear view of our goal.

We passed beyond the cover of the intervening bush, and there lay the beach, with no less than fifteen canoes drawn up on it. They were of various sizes, some large enough to carry perhaps thirty men, others not capable of accommodating more than four or six.

The headland I had indicated to Bob lay about a mile on our right; but the boat was nowhere to be seen. Fortunately there seemed to be no one left in charge of the canoes, and I at once made up my mind to take the smallest (if I could succeed in gaining the beach), and push off in it, and finish the fight afloat, trusting that Bob would yet arrive in time to lend us his aid in effecting our escape.

I told Ella, in a few hasty words, what I intended, directing her to get into the smallest canoe the moment we reached the beach, and then lie down flat in the bottom of it. We hurried forward, for increasing weakness and an occasional swimming of objects before my sight, warned me that my strength was rapidly failing with the blood which was trickling from my wounds.

I had just communicated my intentions to Ella, when I saw something passing swiftly along beyond the low point which formed the northern extremity of the bay, which I knew at once to be the head of the boat's mainsail, and presently she shot clear of the land, and headed well up for the very spot where the canoes lay.

The savages no doubt saw her too, for a shower of arrows was immediately let fly at us; but by this time we were out of their range. A second shower followed, but with no greater success; and then, with a savage yell, at least a hundred blacks sprang forth into the open, apparently *determined* to prevent our escape.

I at once faced round, for, though we were beyond the reach of their arrows, they were by no means beyond the reach of my bullets; and, quickly levelling my rifle, I took deliberate aim, calling on Ella to make the best of her way to the canoes as I did so, covered the nearest savage and fired. Without lowering the rifle from my shoulder, I quickly selected another mark, which, in my haste and eagerness, I missed,

hitting a man close behind him however, so that my shot was not thrown away ; then another, and another, and a fifth.

This checked their rush, and a sixth shot stopped them altogether. My rifle was now empty. I glanced over my shoulder, and saw that Ella was within a few yards of the canoe I had indicated, and that Bob was coming up at a rattling pace ; so I suddenly dropped the rifle from my shoulder, and turned and ran for the beach as fast as my now rapidly failing strength would permit, reloading as I ran.

This, as I expected, proved the signal for a general chase, the savages rushing after me two feet to my one, uttering the most terrific cries and yells, brandishing their clubs and spears, and sending an occasional arrow after me.

I was soon unpleasantly informed that I was once more within reach of their missiles, one of the arrows entering my left shoulder and piercing the shoulder-bone, a second sticking in my left arm, close to the former wound, and three entering my right leg almost simultaneously, taking effect about six inches above the knee. I still

staggered on, however, and, in about two minutes more, which spread themselves out to the length of ages in that exhausting and agonising race, I reached the canoe in which Ella had already placed herself as I had directed.

I had succeeded in reloading all six chambers of my rifle, and I now turned to open fire upon my pursuers once more, in the hope of checking them long enough to get the craft afloat. As I did so, the whole earth appeared to rock and heave about me; my eyes became dizzy and my sight failed, so that I could see nothing but a vast dark crowd of savage faces scowling upon me, and surging to and fro before my reeling vision.

Into this heaving crowd I discharged the contents of my rifle rapidly, but without any attempt at aim, and then turning and flinging the now useless weapon into the canoe, I concentrated all my fast fleeting energies into one supreme effort to launch her.

I faintly heard Bob's shout of encouragement, and earnestly prayed that he might succeed in saving my darling. I felt that *I* was lost, and,

as the cheering cry rang across the water, I threw myself with all my weight against the light craft, which was already half afloat, braced myself against the stem, and felt her move. A spear at this instant pierced me in the back ; but its effect for the moment was but to stimulate me further, and with another violent effort I succeeded in getting her fairly afloat.

I saw, or fancied I saw, the boat within a few yards' distance, and Bob in her, with a rope in his hand ready to heave ; and, plunging heavily into the clear cool sparkling water, I gave the canoe one final desperate outward impulse, and at the same moment felt a crashing, stunning blow at the back of my head—a million stars seemed to dance before my darkening eyes—a momentary feeling of the intensest agony surged through my brain—and I sank insensible into the ankle-deep wavelets which came rippling merrily up to the shore, Ella's despairing shriek ringing in my ears as the last faint glimmering spark of consciousness faded away.



When consciousness at length returned, it was accompanied by a sensation of almost unendurable agony from my numerous smarting, inflamed, and stiffening wounds ; and to this was added the torture of a burning thirst.

I was lying, completely naked, upon the scorching sand, a few yards distant from the water's edge, whither I had been dragged, apparently for the purpose of being stripped of the poor spoil of my clothing.

The sun, now nearing the horizon, poured his fiery beams full upon me, still further increasing the tortures from which I was suffering ; but I believe that to this circumstance alone am I indebted for my preservation from death, for the glowing rays dried and hardened the blood as it oozed from my wounds, and thus prevented my bleeding to death.

To my great surprise, I was entirely alone. The sand around me was impressed with numerous footprints from unshod feet ; and, on looking more intently about me, I saw that they had all left me in the direction of the beach, and the canoes were gone.

This circumstance excited within me anew the direst apprehensions ; for I had not the slightest doubt that the savages were away in pursuit of the boat, and I every moment dreaded to see her reappear, and to hear the triumphant shouts proclaiming our enemies' success.

But the moments, laden with excruciating mental and bodily torture, wore slowly away, and nothing appeared to disturb or break in upon the solitude which surrounded me ; and now, urged by the desire for a cooler spot, I sought to drag my agonised frame from the burning sand to the cool, fresh, verdant greensward, which was but a few yards distant.

Slowly, and writhing at every movement with the keenest anguish, I crawled foot by foot upwards along the beach, and at length, after half an hour of intense torment, sank utterly exhausted upon the utmost verge of the grass-covered plain.

My exertions caused all my wounds to burst open afresh, and I now became aware that I had received several in addition to those inflicted in the fight ; these last being doubtless the result of

wanton cruelty and savage delight on the part of my enemies at finding me in their power.

But I was still as far as ever from the means of slaking my burning thirst, for there was not a drop of fresh water within miles of me, as far as I knew; and had there been, my strength was by this time so completely gone that I could not have crawled another half-dozen yards to save my life, or even to quench that thirst which was now to me almost worse than death.

Stern, stubborn endurance was therefore my only resource, and I sank back upon the cool grass to await, in bitter helplessness, the death which I felt must soon come to my relief.

I now relapsed into a state of semi-consciousness, my thoughts wandering away from my present condition and fixing themselves, with strange pertinacity, upon subjects of the most trifling import; now plunging into vague speculations, and anon indulging in all sorts of fantastic fancies, as fever began to assume its burning sway over my tortured frame.

From this state I was aroused by hearing a joyous shout in the tones of Bob's well-remem-

bered voice ; and, raising myself with difficulty, only to sink back in utter feebleness, I caught a momentary glimpse of the boat in the act of grounding on the beach.

In a few brief seconds more Ella and Bob were beside me, the former raising my head upon her knee, and gazing into my face with an expression of the fondest pity and concern, as her fingers swept the hair gently off my forehead, wet with the clammy dew of suffering.

Bob, too, knelt at my side, uttering expressions of sympathy and encouragement, expressed, as usual, with true nautical figurativeness of speech. Seeing that I was conscious, however, he speedily changed his discourse, and informed me that it was necessary I should be immediately removed ; for, though he had succeeded in decoying the whole of the savages away in pursuit of the boat, and had led them to such a distance as to admit of his evading them and returning in search of me, they were still in chase, and no time must be lost in getting away from the present spot, and returning to the cutter, or we

should again be brought into dangerous proximity with them.

Having explained thus far, therefore, he at once proceeded to raise me in his powerful arms; and though he did so with the utmost gentleness, the agony attending the movement was so intense that I swooned away.

When I recovered, we were afloat and under way, standing off, with flowing sheets, for the headland I have mentioned as forming the northern extremity of the bay.

Ella was seated on the boat's platform or deck, with my head in her lap, and was bathing my face and neck with her pocket-handkerchief, wetted from a pannikin of water which stood by her side, and which was supplied from a small breaker we had brought with us.

As soon as I opened my eyes the dear girl bent over me, and asked, with the tenderest solicitude, whether I felt any better.

"Yes, darling," I answered; "but, for the love of mercy, pray give me some water. I am dying for want of it."

She handed the pannikin to Bob, who imme-

diately filled it, my eyes drinking in, in eager anticipation, every cool, sparkling drop of the precious liquid, as it gurgled crystal-clear out of the bung-hole of the breaker; the next moment the pannikin was drained to the bottom, and I was craving for more. Oh, what a delicious draught was that to my parched and burning lips and throat!

Surely the man who first dreamed of nectar must have been thinking of water, clear and cool, tasted under similar circumstances to those in which I was then placed. My thirst at length temporarily assuaged, Ella once more resumed the bathing of my wounds, tearing up the skirt of her white cotton dress to bind them up with afterwards. I begged her to desist, alluding as delicately as I could to my naked condition, and the shock to her modesty which it must occasion; and assured her I could and would wait until we reached the cutter, when Bob would have leisure to attend to me and enact the part of surgeon.

"I know what you mean, Harry, love," she answered; "but do not feel any distress on my

account. I am, I trust, as truly and perfectly modest as any woman living; you will never have the slightest reason to complain of me in that respect. And you know, dear, that to the pure in thought all things are pure; and I can look, as I have already looked, upon your naked body, without one thought save that of sorrow and deepest pity for the cruel wounds with which it is covered. My modesty is not of the spurious kind which would cause me to turn away my face and hide it with simulated blushes, leaving those gaping wounds to remain uncared for; and I hope you will not think the worse of me if I say that I intend, not only to dress every one of them *now*, but as often as they require it, until, with God's blessing, you are completely restored. And am I not your promised wife? That alone, and apart from any abstract question of humanity, is sufficient to justify my resolve, in my own eyes, as I trust it will in yours, dearest. Bob is well enough, he is a dear old fellow in many ways; but utterly unfitted to exercise the delicacy and care, and ungifted with the lightness of touch, necessary in your case. Besides, it is

woman's peculiar province to—— What are you smiling at? Ah! I know. You are laughing at what you have styled my 'pet phrase'; but never mind! I am rejoiced to see that you *can* smile at *anything* in the midst of your pain, my poor darling."

We were by this time rounding the point, and the savages had been visible some five minutes about three miles to the southward, paddling away most furiously, so Bob said, in the vain hope of overtaking the swift boat.

It was not a very long journey from this point back to the cove in which the *Water Lily* was lying, and in about three quarters of an hour we were alongside.

To transfer me on board and below was a most painful operation, and I again swooned away; soon recovering, however, under Ella's gentle ministrations. To my surprise I found she had caused me to be placed in her own cot forward, a proceeding against which I at once protested as strenuously as my feeble powers would allow.

"Dearest, dearest Harry," said she, leaning

over me, and pressing her quivering lips passionately to mine, "do not, I pray you, exhaust yourself and distress me by saying a single word. You are far better here than you would be in your hammock. There you would have no room to turn, whilst here you have plenty; there it is close and stifling hot, whilst here there is a cool and refreshing draught from the open deck-light; and here, too, I shall have more room to move round and get at your numerous wounds to dress them. And here I can remain at your side and watch you constantly, whilst I could not do so very well in the other cabin, without turning poor Bob out of it altogether."

"But," said I, "I protest against your devoting yourself to me so completely as these arrangements imply; you will be ill——"

"Not another word, Harry," she interrupted, stopping my lips with a kiss; "I will not listen to it. I am already your wife in the sight of God, and He knows that no wife can love more fondly than I do; so in this dreadful time I shall perform all a wife's duties towards you, dearest, as in that way only is there any hope

of saving you. You are now still under the influence of excitement, and do not know the extent of your injuries ; but you will find all that out by-and-by, when you become more calm, and then you will need the most vigilant watching and the utmost care to save you from sinking under the effects of exhaustion."

"Oh ! Ella, what can I do to repay you for all this ?" I exclaimed, deeply moved by the dear girl's devotion.

"Live, Harry," she replied passionately ; "live, my dearest ; recover, and bless your poor little Ella with such love as her heart now feels for you. But this will never do," she added quickly, and with a powerful effort to regain her self-control ; "I must lose no time in getting these dreadful wounds bound up, for they are all bleeding afresh ; and, remember, I forbid you to speak another word."

It was time, for I was so utterly exhausted that I felt doubtful whether I should ever recover ; so I lay passive whilst Ella tripped about, procuring basins of warm water, bathing my wounds, and binding them up carefully and tenderly with soft

lint and ample bandages. I had heard Bob's heavy tread bustling about on the deck above for a short time, but I now missed it, and endeavoured to inquire where he was gone; this, however, my nurse would not permit, assuring me that I should learn all that it was necessary to know in due time, and when I was stronger and better able to listen.

The work of dressing my injuries was a long and tedious one, for I had no less than seventeen wounds in different parts of my body, the most serious of which were the spear-wound in my back, and three, close together, in my right breast; the blow at the back of my head; the arrow-wounds in my neck and left shoulder where the weapons had been dragged violently out, lacerating the flesh terribly, no doubt when I was stripped; and a spear-thrust in my right thigh, which completely pierced the limb and seemed to have severed some important artery, from the quantity of blood which gushed from it and deluged the bed on which I lay.

It was quite dark, or as dark as it *could* be with a full moon riding in cloudless beauty overhead,

before the painful task was over ; but the soothing effects of the bathing and the bland and cooling properties of the ointment applied to my smarting wounds were such that I soon felt at ease and free from pain, compared with what my condition had been an hour or two before, and I sank into a feverish doze, in the midst of which I still remained conscious of the frequent application of cool wet cloths to my burning brow, and of the constant moistening of my parched lips with a cool refreshing beverage of some kind.

Gradually I dropped off into a sounder sleep, from which I awoke but once in the night, to find my gentle nurse half-sitting, half-reclining, in a chair beside my cot, fast asleep, with one soft round arm encircling my neck and her fair head resting on the pillow close to my own.

CHAPTER VI.

IMPORTANT NEWS.

THE next day I was in a raging delirium, and for nearly a week did I remain utterly unconscious of all that surrounded me, entirely engrossing the attention of my companions, and taxing their energies and ingenuity to the utmost to prevent my leaping out of the cot or doing myself some injury, in the unnatural strength and violence of the fever which burned within me.

At length their unremitting care and watchfulness were rewarded by seeing me fall into a deep sleep, in which I remained all night and until the next morning was far advanced; and when I awoke reason had resumed her sway. I knew them both, and could answer their affectionate

inquiries by a faint pressure of the hand or a feeble whisper, but beyond this I had no power to go.

Ella, poor child ! looked terribly pale and careworn, as well she might, for I afterwards learned that during the whole of that fearful time she had never once lain down to rest ; such sleep as she had been able to obtain being snatched at uncertain intervals in a chair by the side of my cot. Bob had, of course, insisted sturdily and stubbornly on performing his full share of the watching ; but my poor little darling could not even then tear herself away, though she was able to do but little beyond supplying my incessant demands for water, it being utterly impossible during the whole time to renew any of the bandages.

And now ensued the terrible state of exhaustion and utter prostration consequent on my great loss of blood and the fever which had so long been devouring me. I had not strength even to raise my hand without assistance, and as to turning myself, I might as well have attempted to fly.

- For nine days did I thus lie hovering between

life and death, my weakness being such that my wounds had to be dressed one at a time and at intervals ; and the very pressure of the sheet—the only cover it had been possible to throw over me from the time that I was first brought on board—seemed almost more than I could endure.

At length, however, the assiduous care and ceaseless attention which were bestowed upon me had their effect, and I began to rally ; and, the turning-point once passed, soon mended rapidly.

The moment that my recovery seemed at all probable Bob got the tents rigged up ashore again ; and, one fine morning when I appeared a little stronger than usual, and seemed able to bear the removal, I was transferred to the boat and thence to the shore : where my own hammock, carefully slung and provided with clean linen, awaited me. The change from the confinement of the small cabin to the tent, the fresh and balmy air, scent-laden from the adjacent groves, and, above all, the view from the open end of the tent of the clear sparkling water gently ruffled by the passing breeze, with the tree-crowned, sun-

lighted cliffs on either side, did more for me than the most skilful doctor or the most potent drugs could have effected, and I felt that I was drawing in new life with every inhalation.

I now slept much and soundly, the effect, no doubt, of the fresh, cool air which was freely admitted to the interior of the tent; and when I was not sleeping I was generally eating, Ella exerting all her ingenuity, which was great, in the concoction of light, tempting dishes, to provoke my languid appetite.

Bob, too, was indefatigable in his exertions in my behalf; now ranging the woods with his air-gun, in search of a species of pigeon which he had discovered; anon going away in the canoe (in which Ella had escaped, and which he had contrived to retain) to the rocks, and bringing in sundry delicately-flavoured fish; and then off to the woods again for fruit, of which the island afforded any quantity of various kinds.

As I progressed toward recovery, so did Ella regain in a measure her former cheerfulness of manner, which intense anxiety had greatly subdued; and now that she was once more able to

take her natural rest, the roses speedily returned to her cheeks, and her eyes began to resume their former brightness.

At length the day arrived when I was considered strong enough to listen to Bob's story, and be made acquainted with all that had occurred since the disastrous afternoon of our walk on the south side of the island.

"You must know," he began, "that as soon as I left you and your precious little dearie here ashore, I went straight away back to the channel, and anchored the craft in a bit of a nook in the first reach, where I thought as I should find some sport. Well, I didn't get so much as a nibble, and, at last—whether 'twas the heat of the sun, or what 'twas, I can't tell ye—I dropped clean off to sleep. How long I slept I can't say, but I was woke up by the tug-tugging of the line, which I'd made fast with two or three turns round my finger. I started to haul in, and had got my fish very nigh out of water, when he broke away, and I lost him. I was just baiting my hook afresh, when I thought I heard your rifle; and I fancied I'd overstayed my time, and that you was firing

a signal to jine company. So I rouses up my killick, and makes sail ; and whilst I was doing it, I hears two reports, one close upon t'other. I guessed at once't that something was amiss ; so I crowds all sail upon the craft, and steers as straight as she would go for the p'int. Whilst I was running down towards it I fancied I heard a shout, though I couldn't be sure, but you may depend upon it I was now pretty anxious to get round the p'int, and see where you was and what was going on. As soon as I cleared it, I sees you and dearie hurryin' towards the beach, as though somethin' was amiss, but what it was I couldn't at first make out, until I see'd the blackies jump out of the bushes, and then I knowed at once what a reg'lar fix you was in. I see'd ye fire at 'em, lad, and bring 'em up with a round turn, and my fingers was just all of a itch to be alongside of ye with one of them same revolvin' rifles in my fist, though I'm, a'ter all, no great matter of a shot. Well, I see'd ye run, and I see'd the little lady here step into the canoe and lie down ; and then in course I knowed what you was after, so I shapes a course accordin'.

You knows what foller'd, lad, but you don't know, and I can't tell ye, what I felt when I saw ye struck down almost within reach of my arm, and dragged away by them incarnate devils. It seemed to me as though every mother's son of 'em was fighting for the first blow at ye, and I give ye fairly up for lost, sartain. But there warn't much time for thinkin', for some of 'em started to launch their canoes at once't in chase of dearie here, and I only had jist time to sheer alongside and take the craft in tow, when they was afloat and a'ter us. I stood away to the south'ard, hardly knowing what I was doin', and soon ran away from 'em hand over hand. I was getting little miss here out of the canoe into the boat the best way I could, for she'd fainted, when the idee comes into my old head that if I could but entice the whole lot of 'em to chase me, I might lead 'em far enough away to give 'em the slip and run back and get your body—for I never doubted but what you was dead. So I goes for'ard and lets run the main-halliards, and down comes the sail, accidental like. The niggers gives a shout as soon as they sees this, and I hauls my wind as though I couldn't go

no further to leeward without my mainsail ; and, sure enough, the trick answered to perfection, for the whole posse of 'em comes scurryin' down to the beach, launches their canoes, and shoves off, paddling like mad to the south'ard, to cut me off. ' All right, my hearties, go it,' says I ; ' but,' says I, ' you haven't the pleasure of knowin' a sartin Robert Trunnion,' says I, ' if you supposes as you're going to carcumvent him that a'way.' So I lets 'em come well up with me, and the nearer they got, the louder they yells, and the harder they paddles ; and you might ha' thought by the row that all hell had broke loose, as perhaps it had, or them devils wouldn't ha' been there. Well, I'd got the main-halliards led aft to where I was sittin', and as they closed, I gently sways the sail up, a few inches at a time, and keeps grad'llly away, until we was all spinnin' away dead to the south'ard, they paddlin' like fury, and I just keepin' far enough ahead to be out of range of their harrers. We'd run, I s'pose, a matter of four knots, when I sees that the reef sinks lower and lower below the water ; and by the time that we had gone another couple of miles, there was unbroken water all over

it. So I edges easily away to the west'ard, they following, till we'd got an offing of about four miles from the shore, and there was a tidyish jump of a sea for 'em to paddle 'ag'in, though I know'd 'twould make no matter of difference to the boat ; and then I gives the tiller to the little lady, who'd come round ag'in, goes for'ard and h'ists the sail full up, and then hauls sharp up and goes about, keeping as straight away for the bay ag'in as I dared for the reef. The devils set up another yell at this, and round they goes like tops, heading about east, to cut me off ; but I soon see'd as they was pretty well done up—for I'd kept 'em paddlin' all they knowed, in the hopes of coming up with me—and I felt satisfied as I'd be able to get back in time to get your body and be off ag'in afore they could overhaul me. Well, you knows that part of the story too ; so it needs no telling. Directly you was in your cot, I rouses the gun out of the cutter into the boat, takes a goodish lot of cartridges, shot and shell with me, and out I goes ag'in, fallin' in with the rascals just off the nor'-western end of the cliffs. They was hugging the shore pretty close, and I was dreadful afraid

as they knowed the cove, and was bound in there. So as I'd loaded the gun afore starting, I just gives 'em a shell, right into the thick of 'em, and that seemed to sicken 'em all at once ; for they ups helm, and away they goes faster even than they'd come, and I a'ter 'em. The first thing I did was to get between them and the land ; and as soon as they see'd that there warn't no chance of gettin' ashore and takin' to their cursed woods ag'in, away they all goes helter-skelter for our passage, and directly they was fairly in it, I heaves the boat to, loads the gun ag'in, and a'ter 'em once more, for I was detarmined that I'd drive 'em fairly out to sea, and then blow 'em all to hell, where they come from ; and—to make a long story short—that's just what I did, lad : bearing down upon a canoe until I *couldn't* miss her, and then plumping a shell into her at one eend and out at t'other. I tarred the whole lot with the same brush, except one little craft with only four hands in her, and she I chased clean out to sea altogether, givin' 'em a shot close past 'em, as a freshener of their energies, just as I hauled my wind ; and if ever they gets back to their own

country—wherever 'tis—I'll bet my life they'll never be for coming to *this here* island ag'in."

Such was Bob's story, and such the end of the adventure, for though we remained at the island nearly seven weeks, we never saw any further signs of savages.

In about a month from the date of the adventure I had so far recovered as to be able to hobble about a little, a few yards only at a time; and then I began to regain strength rapidly. By the end of the following week I was able, with the assistance of Bob's strong arm, to get as far as the cascade every morning, and take a bath; and this, too, helped me on wonderfully towards entire convalescence. My wounds had closed, and were by this time so far scarred over that I was able to dispense with all dressing and bandages, and we began to talk about making another start, finally arranging to do so as soon as the new moon attained her first quarter, which would be in another fortnight.

It was, I believe, on the Sunday following this arrangement that Bob set off the first thing after breakfast to attempt an ascent of the mountain,

he having discovered, as he believed, a spot at which an active man with good nerves might surmount the natural impediments which existed near the base.

I cautioned him to be very careful for our sakes as well as his own, for I was still too weak to afford him any very effectual assistance in the event of a mishap : and a broken limb halfway up the mountain-side would have been death to him just at that time.

Ella and I were, of course, society for each other, and we wandered about the lawn-like ravine and reposed at frequent intervals beneath the grateful shade of the trees, in blissful oblivion of the passage of time, waiting quite contentedly until Master Bob chose to rejoin us, which he faithfully promised he would in time for dinner.

At length, however, the position of the sun in the western heavens warned us that the hour named was long past, and I proposed a walk as far as the head of the ravine, hoping to meet the truant returning. We walked slowly, my strength not yet being sufficient to permit of very active exertion, and by the time that we reached the point aimed at, the entire landscape was flooded in

the lovely pinky-purplish haze which immediately precedes sunset. Still no Bob made his appearance, and I began to grow seriously alarmed. We waited another half hour, and then, just as the sun was about to disappear in the purple western wave, and we had made up our minds to return to the cutter, thinking he might possibly have passed down the ravine on its opposite side, he made his appearance.

To my surprise, he seemed singularly uncommunicative, and we could get but little out of him beyond the fact that he had, with very great difficulty, reached the summit, and found my conjecture as to its being an extinct crater correct. He thawed a little during dinner, and volunteered the information that he had seen land far away on the southern board—nearly or quite a hundred miles distant, he supposed—and had seen the loom of land to the westward, or about west-north-west, and also to the northward. He was of opinion, he said, that our late enemies had come from the land seen to the southward and were bound north, touching at our island on their way, on some marauding excursion, as he had been able com-

pletely to sweep the island in every direction from the commanding elevation of the mountain-top, and had detected no sign whatever of "niggers" in any direction. With this he dropped the subject and adverted to my condition, questioning me solicitously—unusually so, I fancied—as to how I felt, the extent of my strength, where we had been, and what we had seen. He was particularly curious on this latter point, and asked the same question so repeatedly that Ella made some laughing remark, I forget what, upon it, and he carefully avoided any further repetition of it for the remainder of the evening, at least as long as Ella was with us.

When at length she retired to her own tent for the night, however, he became more communicative. I was already undressed and in my hammock, and he was sitting smoking beside me, and after a silence of some ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, during which he seemed to be ruminating deeply, he began.

"I've something to tell ye, lad," said he, knocking the ashes contemplatively out of his pipe as he spoke, "but dash my ugly old wig if I'm at all

sertain that I ought to say anything about it to-night, seeing as it can't do much good, and might only be upsetting of ye for the night ; but your head's better nor mine in matters of this sort, and I confess I should like to have your idees upon the subject afore I sleep. Maybe they'll in a way mark out a course upon which my idees can travel a good bit of a way betwixt this and morning, and even that much'll be an advantage gained. The fact is that I've see'd something as I didn't expect to see whilst I was away up aloft there"—pointing with the stem of his pipe backwards over his shoulder toward the mountain—"and the sight has disturbed me a little and set me thinkin' a good deal."

"Indeed," said I, "what have you seen, Bob? You must perforce tell me all about it now, for you have excited both my curiosity and my apprehensions."

"Not much need for the last, boy, I hope and believe," answered he, "but it's best perhaps as you should know at once—so, without any further palaver, the *Albatross*, the pirate brig, is inside the reef, and is lying at anchor at this very moment in

the bay where you was so near losing the number of your mess."

"The *Albatross*!" exclaimed I; "nonsense, Bob; surely you must be mistaken! Is it not some whaler, think you, come in to water!"

"No, no," said he; "it's no whaler, Harry. Whalers wouldn't come so far within the group as this here island. And when did ye ever know me mistaken about a vessel as has given us such good reason to remember her as this here brig? I knowed her the minute I set eyes on her: firstly, by a patch in her foresail, as you might ha' noticed the last time we see her; nextly, by the shape of her main-topmast-staysail; and, thirdly and lastly, by the whull look of her, which enables a seaman to recognise a ship in the same way as one of your 'long-shore folks recognises an acquaintance in the street when they see him, though he may be dressed exactly like a score of other people within hail. And what's more, I can make a pretty near guess as to what's become of that whaler that he went a'ter when he found we wasn't to be had, for I see he's got three of the chap's whale-boats, to replace the two as was

expended in our little trifle of a brush, no doubt."

"This is important news, indeed," said I; "and news that provides matter for very serious reflection. What do you suppose has brought them in here, Bob? Did you see anything by which you could form an opinion?"

"Yes," replied he, "I did. Want of water may be one thing; but it's my idee that they've come in here to give their craft an overhaul, for they'd no sooner let go their anchor than they outs boats, and one watch pulls ashore and turns to building huts on the green, whilst t'other watch sends down t'gallan' yards and masts, and unbends the sails and sends 'em all down on deck."

"Then they are likely to make a pretty long stay," said I; "and, in that case, we may be discovered at any moment."

"That they're likely to stay here some time I'll not deny," returned Bob; "but I don't feel partic'lar oneasy about bein' discovered. It's like enough as some on 'em may take the fancy in their heads to scale this here bit of a mountain; but I've made it my business to give the place a reg'lar

overhaul this a'ternoon, and the thing *can't* be done from the south'ard—not without ladders, that is, and good long uns at that ; and I've found out, too, that though you may get round to t'other side of the mountain from here, you can't get down to the level ground beyond. I never see such a place, it's nothing but precipices one atop of t'other ; and there's one place I come to which one man might defend ag'in just as many as ever like to come a'ter him, by just standin' behind a sort of wall in the cliff and shoving of 'em over the edge as they tried to get round it. No, no ; you make your mind easy on that p'int, lad ; we ain't to be got at except 'tis by water, and I reckon they'll be all too busy to spare a boat's crew to come the length of this ; and if they did, it's a thousand chances to one that they'd never find the openin' into this here cove. Why I run past it myself the day as we brought you in here wounded, and I'd never have found it if I hadn't knowed just where to look for it. So it's my opinion as we may stay here quiet and comfortable enough so long as we've a mind to ; and then, when we're tired of waitin', we can slip out quietly in the night, and

nobody be any the wiser. So much for that. Now for an idee that's come into my head, and that I can't get rid of noways. Wouldn't it be a pretty trick to sarve these chaps, if we was to take the brig and carry her out to sea under their noses, leavin' of 'em here to amuse themselves the best way they could?"

"It *would* be a pretty trick indeed," I replied, "if it were possible; but at this moment I cannot see how it is to be done. The difficulties in the way of its accomplishment are too many for only a couple of men to overcome. Were we half-a-dozen, or even four, we might perhaps do it; but we could never get her out clear of the reefs by our two selves. Besides, before we could get the canvas on her, they would be alongside of us in their boats, even if the watch, which they will of course leave on board, were overpowered."

"I don't reckon as they'll keep much of a watch aboard her where she's lying," returned Bob. "She's as safe as if she was in harbour, not more'n a mile from the beach, and on the lee-side of the island; and as to gettin' her out, you've only to stand to the south'ard under fore-and-aft canvas,

and it's my belief as she'd fetch out clear of the reef from where she's lyin' in one tack. You recollect as I told ye that the reef dipped as it went to the south'ard? Well, it's my opinion as there'd be water for her over it by the time she was far enough south to make it worth while to think about heaving of her about. 'That's the road as she came in by."

"If that is the case, perhaps it *might* be done, then, if we could contrive to gain possession of their boats first of all," said I; "but what is to become of the cutter in the meantime? I've no fancy for leaving her here to fall into their hands; and, to speak the truth, now that she has brought us so well thus far, I should like to finish the voyage in her. No, if such a thing were attempted at all it would be attended with the utmost risk, and could only be successful in the event of our being able to *steal* on board; and the cutter is not suitable for such service. But I'll tell you what has just occurred to me. There is just a bare possibility of our being able to steal on board in the canoe some dark night, and set fire to the brig; and then come back here, get the cutter under

weigh, and be off at once. But this even can only be done in the event of there being no one left on board at night, and this I consider very unlikely."

"That's the plan!" exclaimed Bob, with enthusiasm. "Burn the craft afore their eyes, and leave 'em to get off in their boats, if they like."

"Not so," said I. "If this scheme is undertaken at all, I should certainly do it effectually. Take their boats away, and burn the brig, and here they must remain prisoners for a considerable time at least; for this island is quite out of the route of all honest craft, ourselves perhaps excepted."

"Better and better still!" exclaimed Bob, in high glee. "Now, I never should ha' thought of that, because, somehow, it seems cruel and unnat'ral like to burn sich a beauty of a craft as that there brig; but it's the proper plan, Hal—there's no doubt of that. We two *couldn't* take care of both the brig and the cutter in anything but the very finest of weather; and it's better to burn the craft, beauty as she is, than that them villains should misuse her to rob and murder honest seamen, and do worse

to their wives and darters. Curse 'em ! I shan't forget in a hurry that poor young thing as we see lying dead in the cabin of that American ship ; and I'd burn the finest craft as ever was launched, afore they should have the chance to commit another sich a piece of devilish villainy. Now, Harry, lad, mind me, we *do* this here little piece of work. You've got hold of the eend of the right coil of idees, and I can see as your heart's set upon it ; and I, Robert Trunnion, am the man as'll back ye up in it through thick and thin, and there's my hand upon it. You get well and strong as fast as you knows how, and I'll go aloft there every day, and keep my eye upon 'em all day long, and see what 'tis they intends doing ; and the first chance we has, mark me, the job's *done*. Now, let's blow the light out, and get a good night's sleep upon it."

Bob suited the action to the word, and in less than ten minutes I had auricular evidence that, as far as the sleep was concerned, he was carrying his precept most thoroughly into practice.

On the following morning, as soon as breakfast was over, Bob and I set off up the ravine, my com-

panion providing himself with our best telescope, a few biscuits, and a flask of weak grog, as it was his intention to remain on the summit of the mountain the entire day watching the motions of the pirates, unless he happened to see anything rendering an earlier return advisable.

I did not feel quite so easy in my mind as Bob did with regard to the chances of a boat being detached to examine the island, and, in such an event, of our cove escaping detection ; so I arranged with him that, if he observed anything of the kind, he was to fly his handkerchief from the branch of an isolated tree which grew on a small projecting platform near the summit, and which was quite visible both from the cutter and the ravine, but was hidden by the mountain-top itself from the pirates ; and I decided that, if the signal were displayed, I would convey Ella to the spot he had spoken of on the previous evening as capable of being so easily defended, and would then return to the cutter, try the effect of a shell or two upon the boat if she appeared within the cove, and afterwards, if need be, retire to the place of Ella's concealment, and make a stand there.

In furtherance of this arrangement I got Bob to show me the spot, which I found, on personal inspection, to be fully as impregnable as he had declared it to be ; and I also ascertained, as he had done, that it was quite impossible to get round the mountain by land.

We then separated, Bob making the best of his way up the mountain-side, and I returning to the shore, loading myself, as I went, with the finest and choicest fruit I could find.

I was met, about half-way up the ravine, by Ella, and we both strolled quietly back to the beach together, my fair companion following my example, and loading herself with fruit.

When we reached the beach, I set about striking the tents, and got the sails, spars, and lighter articles back on board the cutter, as there was now no knowing at what moment it might be necessary for us to be off ; and this task, in my then weak condition, occupied me the greater part of the day—getting them on board, that is, and putting the spars in their places, rigging them, and bending the sails.

By the time that I had finished, everything was

back into its old berth, with the exception of about a couple of canoe-loads of heavy articles, which might be run on board in twenty minutes or half an hour, and then we should be ready to start at a moment's notice.

I even contrived to take our tube-boat to pieces and stow her away below, though the tubes gave me some trouble in getting them inboard ; but I managed this at last by parbuckling them up over the side with the aid of the throat-halliards.

Of course I kept a strict watch on the tree near the summit all this time ; but no signal fluttered from it, so I assumed that they were all too busy on board the brig to make explorations, relying on their numbers for safety in case of an attack ; or else, that whatever explorations might be afoot were being conducted by land.

At length everything was done that my unaided efforts could effect ; and then, taking Ella on shore with me in the canoe, I set out for another walk up the ravine in quest of a little more fruit, to complete our sea stock. I was rather anxious to take as much of this as possible to sea with me, for I have always held the belief that the fruit

which flourishes best in any particular climate, if partaken of in moderation, is beneficial to the health whilst breathing the air of that climate.

Ella expressed her surprise once or twice during the day, both at the somewhat abrupt manner in which our encampment on shore was broken up, and at Bob's sudden predilection for so unsailor-like an amusement as mountain-climbing; but I answered her carelessly, anxious not to alarm the dear little girl by acquainting her with the fact that we had unexpectedly acquired such very undesirable neighbours.

Near the head of the ravine, I was fortunate enough to come upon a banana-tree laden with exceptionally fine fruit, and I succeeded in possessing myself of two noble bunches of bananas which had arrived at exactly the right condition for cutting. Each bunch was as heavy as I could well lift, and, having got them to the ground without bruising any of the fruit, I cut a strong stake, and placed it, with a bunch at each end, fair in the pathway which I knew Bob would take on his way to the beach, feeling certain he would know why

it was placed there, and would bring it down with him.

We then returned, cutting a few splendid pines and gathering a little bread-fruit and a few figs as we went, and paddled back to the cutter, where Ella and I remained, fully occupied with each other, until it was quite dark, when, just as the little fairy was on the point of going below to see to the tea, I heard Bob's hail, and, jumping into the canoe, I soon joined him on the beach.

"Well, Harry," said he, as I drew the light canoe up a foot or two on the beach, "it seems that you haven't been nowadays idle whilst I've been aloft there spying into the enemy's movements. I hardly knowed what to make of it when I first found the tents struck and 'most everything gone. But I'm glad in one sense that matters is so far for'ard, though I'm sorry in another; for I'm greatly afeared you've been working hard and have tired yourself, and there's just a chance of our havin' our hands full of work to-night. I stumbled over these here bananas as I was coming down the ravine, and brought 'em along, as I s'pose it was intended I should."

"Just so," I answered. "Now let me hear the result of your day's observations. I have amused myself, as you see, in getting as many of our things as I could back into the cutter; for I felt that, in the present condition of affairs, it may be imperatively necessary for us to be off at a moment's notice. But I do not feel very much fatigued; I am picking up strength rapidly, and my experience of to-day has shown me that I am stronger than I really thought I was. There are a few things still lying about here which were rather too heavy for me single-handed; but when these are on board and stowed away, we can be off at any moment."

"So much the better," returned Bob. "Let's get a few on 'em into the canoe to once't, and whilst we're working I can be telling ye what I've see'd from my perch up aloft there. It won't take very long in the telling. In the first place, two boats has been right to the south eend of the island. They went away full o' men, and landed all hands, excepting a couple of men in each boat; and while the shore party was reg'lar beating the woods the boats paddled slowly back, keepin' close

in shore, to take their shipmates off in case of anything going wrong, at least that was my idee. Then I soon made out that another party was working their way to the nor'ard from their camp, giving this eend of the island a overhaul. I see'd 'em often, crossing the open country between the different clumps of trees, and was able once or twice to hear faintly their shouts to one another. This lot would ha' made me very oneasy, hadn't I give the place such a complete overhaul myself no later'n yesterday, for they seemed to be bent on getting up the bit of a mountain, and stood off and on, this way and that, as though they *wouldn't* be beat ; but they had to give it up at last and go back, though I make no manner of doubt as they've pretty well decided to come this way with a boat to-morrer, and finish their survey of the island. So much for the shore gang. They're all back in their camp by this time, and if they don't sleep without rocking it won't be for want of walking, and shouting, and hollering ; and let me tell ye, lad, it's no joke to be fighting your way through thick bush for hours at a time, as most of them chaps have been doing this blessed hot day.

“ Now, as to the brig, it's my opinion as they means to careen her, just as we've done with our little barkie. They've been working like galley-slaves aboard there all day, and have stripped her to her lower masts. The sails are all gone ashore, for I saw 'em lowered over the side into the boats with these same two good-looking eyes of mine, but the spars is still aboard. They've been striking out cargo wholesale, and, to *my* mind, in a most lubberly, unseaman-like fashion. If it had been me, now, I should ha' built a raft with all the spars, and rafted the things ashore, but they've done everything with their boats; maybe, hows'ever, it's valyable stuff, and they didn't care to trust it to a raft. It was a'most all boxes and bales, of all sorts and sizes, the pickings of many a good ship's cargo, I'll warrant. Now I reckon that a'ter the work as this lot has got through to-day *they'll* sleep pretty sound too, so it's *my* idee that we ain't likely to have a much better chance for playin' our little trick upon 'em than we shall have to-night. They're all as tired as tired can be, you may take your oath upon that; and they'll sleep without any fear of savages, for the reason that

they've give the island a pretty thorough overhaul without findin' any. And to-morrow it may be too late ; for if so be as they comes this way in a boat, it won't do for us to be found here, and the chances is that we shall have to cut and run for it, without doing 'em a farthing's-worth of harm a'ter all. The sails all being took ashore knocks my little plan for carryin' the brig off clean on the head, even if her spars was aloft to set 'em on, which they're not. So I s'pose we shall have to burn the pretty little craft, if we're to do anything at all. Now what say ye, lad ?"

"Simply, that whatever is to be attempted must be attempted to-night," I replied. "The reasons for doing so are too obvious to need enumeration ; so we will get our few traps on board, have tea, and then snatch what rest we can between this and midnight, when we must be stirring again. I would give a great deal to see this brilliantly starlit sky overcast, but we must take things as we find them, and only use the greater precautions. Now I think we have as much in the canoe as she will safely carry, so let's shove off ; we can come

back for the remainder after tea. And mind, Bob, not a word of this before Ella."

"Trust me for that," returned Bob. "Let the little dearie turn in and get her night's rest undisturbed by any anxiety on your account. We can slip off quietly at the right time, without her bein' a bit the wiser; and it'll be soon enough to talk about this here job when we've done it."

We were by this time close alongside, and no more was said. Everything was got out of the canoe and stowed in its proper place, and we then went to tea, getting the remainder of the goods on board and stowing them away immediately that the meal was over; after which Bob stretched himself out on the lockers below, and went to sleep, whilst Ella and I remained on deck until about ten o'clock. I was glad when the dear girl wished me good-night and left me; for I could not but feel that, praiseworthy and righteous as was our proposed adventure, it was one which most seriously involved her safety and well-being, closely knit with ours as her fortunes were, and I could not conceal from myself, either, that we were about to run a tremendous risk, ignorant as we

were of what the camp arrangements of the pirates were ; and I wished to have time to reflect calmly upon all the risks we ran, and the best possible means of avoiding them, before setting out. Everything would depend upon whether a watch were set on board the brig or not. Bob was strongly of opinion that they left her to take care of herself at night, but I thought otherwise.

CHAPTER VII.

DESTRUCTION OF THE "ALBATROSS."

I REMAINED on deck until midnight, in anxious self-communion ; and then, slipping off my light canvas shoes, went below and quietly aroused Bob. He instantly arose, and accompanied me, noiselessly and bare-footed, to the deck. We had no tools or implements of any kind to hamper us, my sole provision for the expedition consisting of a couple of boxes of matches, which, with our sharp knives and a bottle of grog, I considered was all that we needed.

I confess that my heart throbbed a little more rapidly than usual as our paddles dipped in the water, and the light canoe shot away from the cutter's side, but it was from a feeling that I was

at that moment leaving, perhaps for ever, and to a terrible fate, one whom I loved more dearly than my own life, and that, too, without one word of farewell ; rather than from personal apprehension. I left a hastily-scrawled note in pencil on the cabin-table, to the effect that we had occasion to go away for a short time, but hoped to be back in time for breakfast, in case we should be delayed longer than we anticipated ; but this was all.

As soon as we were fairly out of the cove, I communicated my plans to Bob, impressing upon him all my arrangements, in case of contingencies requiring an alteration in my original plan ; for, as soon as we were fairly at work, everything would have to be done, as far as possible, in absolute silence, and I did not wish to leave any explanations for a moment when, perhaps, a single word incautiously uttered might lead to our betrayal.

We paddled on close under the cliffs, and in about half an hour reached the spot where the sandy beach on the western side of the island commenced. Here we gently grounded the canoe,

laid our paddles cautiously and noiselessly in, lifted the craft far enough up on the beach to prevent her floating away, and then, keeping as much within the shadow of the trees as we could, made the best of our way along the beach to the low point already mentioned as forming the northern extremity of the bay which had witnessed the fight with the savages, and in which the pirate brig now lay at anchor.

There was no moon at this time, the young crescent having set some hours before ; but the night was brilliantly starlit, and, though the light thus afforded was an assistance in one way, it was very much against us in another, materially increasing our chances of detection.

Half an hour of rapid walking brought us to a point where I thought that, by striking inland, we might contrive to cut short across the neck of land forming the junction of the headland with the main, so to speak ; and now the utmost caution became necessary.

I warned Bob to avoid everything which had the remotest likeness to a branch or twig of any kind, the sudden sharp snapping of which would

be sure to attract attention, I thought, though the air was filled with the chirping of millions of night insects of all kinds.

At length we caught sight of the pirates' bivouac, and, almost at the same instant, saw a figure rise from the ground, stretch itself wearily, and throw a pile of branches upon the dying embers of the fire.

This showed that, hard as their work of the previous day might have been, here was one wakeful individual, at all events, among them; and upon him we kept our anxious gaze intently riveted, watching his every motion with the closest scrutiny.

We saw him walk to the outside of the circle, beyond the limits of the feeble light from the nearly extinguished fire, and peer earnestly into the darkness on every side, going all round the circle, and making the same careful inspection outwards in every direction; and, lastly, he walked down towards the beach far enough to satisfy himself that the boats (which we could just discern) were all right; when he returned, flung more wood on the fire, and then sat down close to windward

of it, out of the way of the smoke, filled his pipe, and lighted it.

Of course we took very good care to conceal ourselves effectually whilst this patrol of the camp was being made, and I embraced the opportunity to point out to Bob that all the boats seemed to be anchored at a few yards' distance from the beach, excepting a small punt, and she was drawn a foot or two up on the sand.

The fire now began to blaze up brightly, and I thought this a favourable moment to proceed ; for, whilst it afforded us a sufficiency of light to enable us to avoid such obstacles as roots of trees and twigs and branches of shrubs, it would dazzle the eyes of the lonely watcher, and effectually prevent his seeing anything beyond a few yards distant.

I accordingly pulled Bob's sleeve to attract his attention, and, pointing to the punt, intimated to him that she must be our first object of attack.

We now both rose to our feet once more, and, stealing as rapidly forward as we could, taking advantage of every little bit of cover that offered to pause and reconnoitre for a moment, reached, after about twenty minutes of breathless suspense,

the half-stranded punt. To our infinite chagrin, there were no oars in her, and without these we could do nothing.

We now commenced a hurried consultation in cautious whispers as to what had better be done, keeping a wary eye upon the sleeping camp and its solitary watcher all the while. Whilst we were doing this, I suddenly caught sight of a pair of short oars, which I knew in a moment must belong to the punt, reared against a tree in the very midst of the bivouac, and in the full light of the now brilliant fire, and within view of the watching seaman.

I saw it was absolutely necessary that we should have those oars, so I pointed them out to Bob, and directed him to remain *perdu*, whilst I made an attempt to secure them.

I then set off down the beach until I was far enough away to be able to waik across the open and into the shadow of the bush without being seen, which I succeeded in doing. Once there, I commenced a stealthy approach, putting each foot carefully and noiselessly to the ground, and not venturing to raise one until the other was firmly

planted. In this manner I contrived to make my way onward unobserved, and at last gained a cover behind the trunk of the tree against which the oars were standing.

I now took as complete a survey of the bivouac as I could without exposing myself, and, counting heads, I found that there were no fewer than eighty-three sleeping pirates within a few yards of me, in addition to the man on watch. He appeared to be, just at the moment, either in a fit of deep abstraction or a doze; so, without waiting for a better opportunity, I cautiously reached my arm round the tree-trunk, grasped one of the oars, and brought it round to my own side, without so much as the rustle of a leaf. Emboldened by my success, I now tried for the second, which I also succeeded in securing.

Taking an oar in each hand, I at once proceeded to retrace my steps, and, for the first stage, aimed at getting behind a tree which stood only about three yards distant. I soon reached this spot, and on slipping behind the trunk, and taking a hasty glance backward, I was greatly alarmed at seeing the pirate on watch on his feet, looking intently in

my direction, and shading his eyes with his hand. I at once concluded that I had been seen, and waited in breathless expectancy for the shout which was to raise the entire crew upon me ; but, instead of this, I heard, after a short pause, the voice of the man in soliloquy close to the tree against which the oars had been placed.

"It's d——d odd," I heard him mutter ; "but I could have sworn that them paddles was standin' up ag'in this here tree, half-an-hour ago ; what the h—l's become of 'em ? Surely none of the chaps is slipped off to have a yarn with old Steve ; he won't thank 'em for disturbing of him at this time o' night, and rousing him out from between the guns, where I'll lay anything the old dormouse is snugly coiled away, instead of looking a'ter the brig, as is his dooty. I'll just slip down to the beach, and see if the boats is all right."

I crouched down behind the tree, and peeped cautiously round the bole ; and there, sure enough, was my watchful gentleman sauntering down towards the boats. I allowed him to get far enough away to prevent his seeing me if he suddenly turned round, and then quickly made

my way along the edge of the sward, keeping within the shadow of the bush until I thought I was far enough away from the fire to permit of my cutting straight across to the punt as soon as the man was once more out of the way.

I achieved this before the pirate reached the beach, and then stood anxiously watching for what might befall. I did not fear for Bob; I knew that his eyes had been taking in everything which happened from the moment I left him, and I felt quite satisfied that he would not spoil our game by running any risk of discovery. The pirate walked quietly on, and at length reached the punt, looked into her, probably for the missing oars, and then turned round and walked back again. He had not advanced half-a-dozen paces before I saw him waving his arms violently; I thought I heard a stifled cry, and then he fell heavily to the ground; and I saw another figure—Bob's—kneeling over him. I at once started off as fast as I could run, taking the oars with me, and in about five minutes I stood by my companion's side. He had got the man down on his face, and was busy lashing his arms firmly behind

his back. I forthwith assisted, and, between us, the unfortunate pirate was soon so securely bound, hand and foot, that it was impossible for him to move.

"He can't sing out," whispered Bob, "for I've stuffed my han'kercher as far down his throat as I could get it, and have made all fast with a turn of his own necktie through his jaws with a reef-knot at the back of his head. He's safe enough till morning."

So it appeared, and we therefore left him, with perfect unconcern, to his fate; lifted the light boat and carried her into the water until she was afloat, and then stepped noiselessly into her—Bob taking both oars, whilst I sat in the stern-sheets ready to take possession of the other boats. They were moored at but a very short distance from the beach, one of them being anchored, and the rest hanging by their painters in a string, astern of her. Bob backed the punt gently off until I had got hold of the painter of the anchored boat, which I easily raised, there being only a small boat-anchor attached to its end; this I carefully placed in the stern of the punt in such a

position as to afford a secure hold, and then, taking an oar apiece, we pulled noiselessly and as quickly as we dared direct off shore, with the whole fleet of boats in tow astern of us.

I considered that we were safe when we had attained an offing of half-a-mile, for I thought it very unlikely that the pirates would then attempt to overtake us by swimming—the only means of pursuit they now had—even if an alarm were given; but everything still remained perfectly tranquil, and continued so until we had rounded the low point so often mentioned: after which, of course, we were unable to see anything which transpired in the bivouac.

We decided to take the boats, five in number besides the punt, over to the mouth of the channel, and anchor them there until we could pick them up again on our way out in the cutter, and then go back after our canoe, so as to prevent the possibility of her falling into the hands of the pirates. Whilst doing this, Bob volunteered an explanation of his motives for attacking the pirate.

“I see’d all you done, Harry,” he observed,

"and thought as everything were going right, until that fool of a feller took it into his head to come down to the beach. I stowed myself away as well as I could under the quarter of the punt—but if his eyes hadn't ha' been choked up with sleep he must ha' see'd me. Hows'ever, he didn't, and when he turned round to go back, thinks I, 'It wouldn't be a bad idee to put a stop to them wanderin' habits of yourn,' thinks I; 'we should be in a pretty mess if you was to come down ag'in, afore we'd got fairly off with them there boats;' and almost afore I knowed what I intended to do, I'd crept up behind him and flung my arm tight round his neck, with my knee well into the small of his back, and down he comes. He tried to sing out, but the minute he opened his mouth I rammed my handkercher down his throat, and that kept him as quiet as a mouse; and so he's like to be till morning, when I reckon he'll find hisself just about in the centre of a hobble, with these here boats all gone, and the brig afire fore and aft, please God. D'ye think I did right, lad?"

"Excellently," I replied; "nothing could pos-

sibly have been done better. Now, here we are, and there goes the anchor. Now, let's stretch away as hard as we can for the canoe; we have been longer than I bargained for over this business, and we shall have daylight upon us before we are finished if we do not look sharp."

I now told Bob what I had heard the pirate say, and that, from his remarks, I gathered that "old Steve" was the only man left on board the brig.

I arranged with Bob that he was to answer in the event of the said "old Steve" hailing us as we went alongside, and directed him what to say, as Bob's phraseology was habitually seasoned far more highly with nautical slang than was my own, and he would, therefore, be less likely to be suspected in the carrying on of a haphazard conversation than myself.

We soon reached the canoe, which lay just as we had left her, and, taking her in tow, we pulled away at once straight for the brig.

In half an hour we reached her, and, contrary to the pirate's surmise, "old Steve" proved to be pretty broad awake.

"Boat ahoy!" hailed he, as we approached.

"Ay, ay!" answered Bob. "Is that you, Steve?"

"In course it is," replied that worthy. "Who the h—l are you, and what do you want off here at this no time o' night?"

"Whisht!" returned Bob warningly. "Belay all that, you old sinner; there's no need to let everybody know as two friends has brought ye off a bottle of grog and a bit of queerish kind of news. Heave us a rope's-end, will ye? for it's that dark that hang me if I can find anything to make fast this here boat's painter to!"

"Ay, ay," answered "Steve;" "look out—here ye are! But who *are* ye at all? I can't make out your voice, d—n me if I can! And who's that with ye?"

"Not make out my voice!" retorted Bob. "No, I s'pose you can't. And I ain't surprised at it neither, considerin' the bushels of smoke as I've swallered from that fire ashore, and the thousands of muskeeters as has flied down my throat; so that's all right. Here's the grog, old cock."

"Steve" leaned over the bulwarks and seized the grog, and Bob and I both climbed the brig's

side at the same instant. In another moment "Steve" was on his back, with Bob's knee and his whole weight on his chest ; and I was soon busy securing the prisoner with a piece of the rope which was lying about in any quantity on the deck. This was quickly done, and the man gagged with a belaying-pin ; after which we made a rapid tour of the deck, cabin, and forecastle, and satisfied ourselves that there was no one else on board to dispute or interfere with our actions.

We decided to set the brig on fire in three places—forward, aft, and in midships—and we lost no time in making our preparations. We found a lot of old sails in a locker at the fore end of the forecastle, and these we divided, taking away a sufficiency to kindle a good rousing fire in the hold ; and over these, as soon as we had deposited them in a suitable position, as well as over those remaining in the locker, we poured a few buckets of tar from a cask we found abroach on deck.

We had no fear about the craft not burning well, for she had a large quantity of combustible materials of all sorts in her hold ; and we hastily

made as large a heap of these as we could, so as to ensure her effectually taking fire.

We then went into the cabin, and piled the bedding from all the berths upon the floor, heaping the chairs and table upon it, and pouring a copious libation of tar upon the whole. We then put a light to it, staying long enough to see the mass burst into fierce flame; when we rushed on deck, and I dived into the hold, whilst Bob went into the forecastle, where we quickly kindled our respective heaps, and then as quickly returned to the deck.

Thin clouds of smoke already poured up through the various openings of the deck, promising speedy and effectual destruction to the brig; so we had now nothing to do but get away from her, and return with all speed to the cutter.

"Steve" was lowered over the side into the punt, Bob and I followed, and we at once pushed off for the cove, in the highest glee at having so successfully carried out our daring scheme.

Daylight was just breaking as we pushed off, and by the time that we entered our cove the sun was above the horizon.

We dropped the punt and canoe astern, and the sails being all bent and loose (I having made every possible preparation for an immediate start whilst waiting for the hour at which to set out upon our raid), we were under way and standing out of the cove in ten minutes more.

Bob got our big gaff-topsail on the craft as we ran down towards the passage, and I kept a bright look-out for any signs of alarm in the pirate camp. The camp itself we could not see, of course ; but I expected to see men moving about on the shore. Nor was I disappointed, for I soon descried a knot of figures standing upon the low point, which was the nearest land to the brig, watching, in apparent stupefaction, the progress of their vessel's destruction.

The brig was by this time almost enveloped in flames, and had the entire crew been on board, they could then have done nothing to save her.

We were quickly discovered, of course, and great was the confusion which our appearance seemed to excite ; but I cared nothing about that—indeed, it was a part of my programme that the pirates

should know to whom they were indebted for their present disaster.

Very shortly a crowd of men appeared hurrying along the beach in our direction, and, as we bore away for the passage, they saluted us with a straggling musketry fire, more in impotent anger than for any harm it could do us, for the shot all fell very far short.

When about a quarter of a mile from the entrance to the channel, I hove the cutter to, and we hauled the punt alongside, took out one of her oars, and cast "Steve" adrift from his lashings, leaving him to get ashore to his comrades as best he might with one oar.

We then filled away once more, and ran down upon the boats, took them all in tow, and stood out through the channel. Another volley of musketry betrayed the irritation of the pirates at the sight of our departure and the loss of their boats, to which Bob replied by giving three ironical cheers.

At this juncture Ella appeared on deck, wonderfully surprised, of course, at all she saw, and I was at once called on to explain. I did so, briefly

narrating the circumstances of Bob's fortunate discovery of the arrival of the *Albatross* at the island, of his having watched the crew all the previous day, of our plan, and of the manner in which it had been carried out, pointing to the burning brig as the issue of it all.

"Oh! Harry," exclaimed she, bursting into tears, "how *could* you run such a fearful risk! Only fancy, you two men venturing into the very centre of these dreadful people's camp, and without arms too! Why what would have become of you if you had been taken? Really, I could almost find it in my heart to be downright angry with you both. I cannot understand men a bit. They seem—some of them—to have been born absolutely devoid of the faculty of perception of danger, even when it is staring them in the face; and accordingly they rush into the midst of all sorts of perils, seemingly with a happy unconsciousness that they are doing so, and with a heedlessness as to consequences which is perfectly bewildering. No—now do not try to coax me, Harry, for I really *am seriously* angry with you. And to think, too, of your being up all night, weak

as you are ! I am surprised that you are not ill again. Oh, Harry" (with fresh sobs), "how thankful I am that you are safe, and that I did not know anything of this until now ! And do not look grieved, darling ; I did not mean what I said. It was very naughty of me, I know, but I was frightened at the thought of the risks you have run, and how all this *might* have ended. Oh, mercy ! what is that ?"

A shock, as if the cutter had struck upon a rock—a dull, heavy *boom*—and the fragments of the burning brig were scattered far and wide, to come pelting down again the next minute in a perfect shower of charred and splintered wood, spars, ropes, and the thousand-and-one other matters usually found on board a ship. The brig's powder magazine had blown up. A heavy cloud of dark smoke marked the spot where the explosion had taken place ; and when it drifted away before the fresh morning breeze, one or two half-burnt timbers floating on the water were all that remained of the *Albatross*.

"Ah !" exclaimed Bob, who was busy coiling down the various halliards, etc., "I've been ex-

pectin' that any time this last half-hour, and I only wonder it didn't happen afore. Well, that's a good endin' to a good job well begun, and I reckon them chaps ashore there may's well make up their minds to stay where they be for the rest of their nat'ral lives, for they've neither ship nor boats, nor stuff to build 'em with either. I don't reckon there's many trees on yon island that'd be much use in a ship-buildin' yard."

"No," said I; "I think we may safely consider that their career of crime and bloodshed is put an effectual stop to, for some time at least; unless, indeed, some unfortunate ship should come to the island, in which case they would have her to a certainty."

"Ay," returned Bob, "but that's a very unlikely chance. These here islands don't lie in the road to nowhere, and it may be years afore they sets eyes on a sail again after they loses sight of that good-lookin' topsail of ourn. I s'pose they won't starve there, will they, lad?"

"No," said I, "there is very little fear of that. The island yields an abundance of fruit, as you know, amply sufficient for all their requirements;

and they have their punt, which will serve them to go fishing on the lagoon, though she is too small for any of them to venture to leave the island in her. So, on the whole, I think they are quite as well off as they deserve."

We were by this time clear of the reef and in open water, so I went down to breakfast, leaving Bob at the tiller. Ella was very penitent for her late "naughtiness," as she termed it, and was so lavish with her endearments, to make up for it, that I would very willingly have experienced such a "thunder-squall" every day of my life to have the air cleared afterwards in so agreeable a manner.

When I returned to the deck, Bob asked me, previous to his going below to get his breakfast, what I intended to do with the boats and the canoe, all of which were in tow. I had not thought very much about it, but now that the question was put, I decided to retain the canoe altogether. She was so small and so light that I thought we could easily carry her on deck in anything but very bad weather, and, ordinarily, she would tow very comfortably astern. If we could contrive to keep her,

I thought, she would frequently save wear and tear in our tube-boat ; and where a passage of a short distance across the calm surface of a lagoon, from the cutter to the shore, was all that was required, she would answer the purpose perfectly well. As to the boats of the *Albatross*, I decided to tow them fairly out of sight of the island, and then abandon them ; thus effectually precluding the possibility of their getting back into their owners' hands, the prevailing winds there being from about south-east, which would drive the boats ever farther and farther from the island. We accordingly retained them in tow for the remainder of that day and all next night, and cast them adrift on the following morning.

We were now within two days' easy sail of the spot which had been indicated to me as the position of the treasure-island : and our thoughts naturally reverted to the question as to whether the treasure really existed or not ; Bob feeling the utmost confidence that it would be found precisely as the dying Spaniard had described it, whilst I began to entertain grave doubts as to our success. The important conversation in which the existence

and position of the treasure were revealed was recalled, almost word for word, and the notes which I had made at the time were frequently referred to: and certainly everything seemed to abundantly justify Bob's confidence, whilst I was quite unable to point to a single word or circumstance tending to confirm my doubts; the fact is, I suppose, that as we drew nearer to our goal, and began to realise more fully the vast influence which the possession of the treasure would exercise upon our future, I must have been influenced by a feeling that it was "too good to be true." There was so very decided an infusion of the romantic element into everything connected with the affair, that my matter-of-fact mind refused to accept the possibility that there might be truth in it after all. I was young then, but I have now lived long enough and seen enough of the world to feel convinced that romance enters so largely into the ordinary circumstances of life, that any middle-aged man might easily furnish, from his own experience, materials for half-a-dozen sensation novels: and I believe that no novel that was ever written is half as sensational as would

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be a minute and strictly true record of the incidents marking the life of such a man. I have in my mind at this moment a man whose life and occupation has for many years been *apparently* of the dullest and most commonplace description. To every one but myself he has appeared to be simply a thorough business-man, punctual to the minute—almost to the second—methodical, accurate, without a thought, apparently, for anything but business ; his very conversation being brilliant only on matters connected with business ; he is, in short, with those who know him pretty well, and even with his own kith and kin, about the very last man who would ever be supposed to know anything about romance, beyond its name. Yet circumstances have revealed to me, beyond all possibility of cavil or doubt, that this man has been the hero of a romance, so thrilling, so startling, so very extraordinary in all its phases, that it would indubitably make the fortune of the great sensation novelist of the day forthwith, if that gentleman's fortune be not already made.

But to return to the *Water Lily*. On the evening of the day following that on which we sailed

from the pirate's island, we found ourselves so near the reputed position of the treasure-island that I decided to heave the cutter to for the night, so as to avoid the possibility of running upon the outlying reef during the darkness. Bob went aloft the last thing, after the sun had set and before darkness closed down upon the face of the tranquil ocean, but he could see nothing that he was able to identify with certainty as land. On the extreme verge of the western horizon he saw, he said, something which *might* be an island; but evening clouds, especially in fine weather and when low down on the horizon, sometimes assume such forms and hues that it is very difficult for even the most experienced mariner to decide whether what he is looking at is land or merely vapour, particularly when land is known or supposed to exist in the direction in which he is looking.

We took in our spinnaker and gaff-topsail therefore, housed the topmast, lashed our helm a-lee, and hauled the fore-sheet over to windward, allowing the jib-sheet to flow. It was my eight hours in, that night: but it was so close below

and the weather was so fine, that I brought my hammock on deck and turned in there, with a waterproof-rug rigged tent-fashion over me, to keep off the dew.

Nothing occurred to disturb the tranquillity of the night; and next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we filled away upon the cutter again and made sail upon our course. Bob should have been in his hammock, or taking his rest in some other fashion, between breakfast-time and noon; but he was so anxious to catch a glimpse of the spot which had attracted us over so many thousand miles of ocean, and had led us to brave so many dangers, that he could not stay below, and he spent the entire morning at the crosstrees on the look-out. I obtained a most excellent observation for longitude, about half-past nine that morning, and on working it up I found that we were barely twenty miles to the eastward of the point we were aiming for; and as we had hove the cutter about at midnight, so as to keep her as nearly as possible directly to windward of the spot, we ought to have been at anchor at noon. But mile after mile was traversed, and

still no land appeared rearing itself above the horizon, and at length the time arrived for me to take my meridian altitude. This also was a very capital observation; and its result was that we found ourselves *exactly* where the island was stated to be situated, with no land in sight in any direction from the mast-head.

I must confess that, in spite of the doubts which had lately obtruded themselves upon my mind, I felt keenly disappointed; and as for Bob, he was so chop-fallen that he had not a word to say.

It was not until I had carefully gone once more over my calculations of that day, and had verified the error in our chronometer for which I had made allowance, and had, in short, satisfied myself thoroughly that we actually were where we supposed ourselves to be, that I realised how strongly, notwithstanding my doubts, I had relied upon finding the island and its buried treasure. So far as the primary object of the voyage was concerned, it appeared that it had been undertaken in vain; and had it not been for our accidental acquisition of intelligence respecting my father, we should

now have been without an object for the further prosecution of the voyage, excepting that of returning home again as quickly as possible, to secure the best berths we could, and make up, as far as might be, for lost time.

We had hove the cutter to whilst I was taking and working up my noon observation; and, as soon as we had fully realised our great disappointment, I got out the chart, and Bob and I pored over it for a full hour in the endeavour to fix upon the one island out of the many in the great Archipelago which was most likely to be the one upon which the *Amazon* was cast away. However, there were so many, all of which would answer equally well to the imperfect description which we had received, that we were at last obliged to give it up and revert to our original resolution of examining *all* the likely places, in the hope that we should be more successful in our second search than we had proved in our first.

We therefore filled away upon the cutter again, upon such a course as would take us up through the thickest cluster of islands; and, such is the elasticity of the human mind, before night closed

down upon us we appeared to have almost forgotten everything connected with the treasure-island, and thought and spoke of nothing but the chances in favour of and against the finding of my father.

CHAPTER VIII.

MY FATHER.

As the sun went down the wind fell light, and we did not average more than four knots an hour all through the three night-watches. I was at first afraid that we were about to have another hurricane, as it is not usual for the breeze to fall so light as we had it just then in the trades. But the glass was high and steady, and the weather looked settled, so I did not shorten sail; and when the sun rose next morning he brought the breeze up again somewhat fresher with him.

It was my eight hours out that night; consequently I was on deck when day broke. As morning dawned, and the obscurity of night yielded imperceptibly before the approaches of the great

day-god, I became conscious that there was a break in the level of the horizon, about four points on my starboard-bow; and, watching this as it continued to grow lighter, I found that it was land, a small and low island apparently, about nine miles distant.

I was rather surprised at this, as according to our chart, which was constructed from the most recent surveys, the nearest land was fully a day's sail distant to the westward.

I decided to take a nearer look at the place, and as this would involve a deviation from the course which the cutter was then steering, and would necessitate a jibe, I left the helm for a moment with a couple of turns of the tiller-rope round the head of the tiller, and went forward to take in the spinnaker.

Formerly we had considered it necessary that both Bob and I should be on deck when handling this large sail; but practice had by this time taught us both how to work the cutter alone, so that it was now only on occasions of emergency that either called the other to assist in making or shortening sail.

As the *Water Lily* drew in closer with the land, I made out that it was a small coral island, with the usual encircling reef and lagoon. It seemed to be about two miles long, but, from the direction in which the cutter was approaching it, I was unable to judge of its width.

I was soon near enough to distinguish the line of surf which betrayed the presence of the surrounding coral reef, and I then called Bob to come on deck and take the helm, whilst I went aloft, as usual, to look out for a channel.

When he came on deck—

“Why, Harry, how’s this?” he exclaimed. “I thought you said there wasn’t no land within a hundred and fifty mile of us last night, and here’s as pretty a little spot, close aboard of us, as a man need wish to set his eyes upon.”

“I went by the chart,” I answered, “and that showed a clear sea all about here. But you can never rely upon a chart here, in the Pacific; what is clear sea at the time that a survey is being made, may very possibly be dotted with a score of such small islands as the one ahead in a very few years. I have read that coral islands form

very rapidly. This one, however, cannot be of such very recent growth, for there are full-grown cocoa-nuts upon it, as well as other trees ; I am surprised that it is not shown on the chart."

I said this as I was standing at the foot of the mast, and on the point of going aloft. In a few seconds more I was standing on the cross-trees and examining the line of surf ahead for the narrow strip of unbroken water which would indicate the existence of a passage through the reef. As I stood thus, my gaze was arrested by the appearance of a small object in rapid motion across the bosom of the lagoon inside the reef, and a scrutiny of a few seconds was sufficient to satisfy me that it was a canoe. Seating myself upon the cross-trees, that I might more conveniently use the glass which I had taken aloft with me, I quickly focussed the instrument and brought it to bear. With its assistance, I was now enabled to discern that the canoe was a craft of about the same size as the one which we had towing astern, and it held three persons. The two who wielded the paddles were black, but, unless my eyes strangely deceived me, the third was a *white man*.

I cannot attempt to describe the extraordinary feeling which came upon me at this discovery.

“Can it be possible,” thought I, “that this is the island upon which the *Amazon* was cast away, and am I about to have the inexpressible joy of seeing my beloved father once more, and so unexpectedly as this?” I again had recourse to the glass, and being now somewhat nearer, I no longer had any room for doubt; the individual who sat in the stern of the canoe, and who, I now saw, was steering the craft with a paddle, *was* undoubtedly white. I now observed, too, that the canoe was passing through an opening in the south-western edge of the reef. The passage would have escaped my notice in the then position of the cutter, had it not been for seeing the canoe passing through it, for it was broadside-on to us, as it were, and the unbroken water was therefore not easily detected. I turned my telescope upon the island, and now saw a thin film of light blue smoke, as from a wood fire, rising from among the trees; but there was no sign of a wreck of any description within view, and if anything of

the kind existed, it must be on the other side of the island.

The canoe was by this time in open water, and I saw that she was paddling along the edge of the reef towards us. Bob now made her out from the deck, and hailed me, asking if I saw her. I answered that I did, and, in an uncontrollable tumult of excitement, descended to the deck. I directed Bob to keep the cutter away for the canoe, for, strangely enough, the thought never entered my head that her occupants might be enemies. I ran down below and got up our club-ensign, which I hoisted at the peak, and as it blew out in the fresh morning breeze, we saw the figure in the stern of the canoe rise to his feet and wave his hat. I took up my glass once more, and was now able to make out that this figure was tall, deeply bronzed by the sun, and had grey hair and a thick bushy grey beard.

“That is a white man, Bob, in that canoe,” said I excitedly.

“A white man !” exclaimed Bob ; “then it’s the skipper, Harry, for a thousand pounds.”

“No such luck, Bob, I am afraid,” replied I ;

“this man is grey-haired, and my poor father’s hair was dark brown, if you recollect.”

“True,” answered Bob; “but if not the skipper hisself, it may be somebody belonging to him.”

“That cannot be, either,” I returned; “for according to the account we received from the seaman, there was no one left with him but the chief mate, who, I presume, was Winter—who, you will recollect, was put into your berth when you met with your accident; and Winter was quite a young man—scarcely thirty, I believe.”

“Well, whoever it may be, we shall soon find out all about him now, for we shall be alongside the little hooker in another five minutes,” remarked Bob philosophically, but with evident disappointment in the tone of his voice.

This was true, for we were nearing the canoe fast. I again had recourse to my telescope, and, with its assistance, was now able to see with perfect distinctness the occupants of the canoe. I scanned with the greatest intentness the features of him who was steering, and who was facing directly towards us; and as I did so, in a tumult of

the most painful agitation and suspense, feature after feature once more became familiar, and notwithstanding the grey hair and beard, I at length recognised, with unspeakable joy, my father.

“Hurrah!” I shouted; “hurrah! it is he—it *is* my father, Bob; and we have found him after all, and that when we little expected to do so. Thank God; oh! thank God!”

“Amen,” answered Bob, taking off his tarpaulin reverently for a moment, while the tears rolled down his weather-beaten cheeks.

We took room, and rounded the cutter to, and as she came up into the wind, with all her canvas shaking, the natives vigorously plied their paddles, and with a few lusty strokes shot their light craft alongside.

I went to the gangway, and held out my hand to assist my father in over our low bulwarks, whilst Bob hove the end of a coil of line into the canoe, shouting to the blacks, “Now then, darkies, look out, and catch a turn with this here rope’s end, will ye? for if you goes astarn, you’ll have all your work afore ye to overhaul us and get alongside again.”

“Good Heaven! that voice—surely I should know it,” murmured my father. “Thank you, sir. Yours is the first sail I have seen for— Why, how is this?”

I had been unable to control myself any longer ; and, to my father’s infinite surprise, he suddenly found himself in my embrace, and, as suddenly, recognised the tones of the voice which called him “father.”

I thought the dear old man would have fainted, but he rallied himself with a powerful effort, though it was some little time before he could speak. At length—

“My son! my noble boy Harry,” exclaimed he. “Great God! Merciful Father! I thank Thee for this great and unexpected mercy. Little did I think, my dear boy, when I saw your white sails standing in for the island, what unexpected happiness awaited me. And, if I mistake not,” added he, “this is my old friend and staunch ship-mate, Robert Trunnion. This is indeed a happy day for me,” grasping Bob’s hand heartily, “a day I have despaired of ever seeing again. But, tell me, what has happened, and how come you to be

here in this small cockle-shell of a craft? You surely cannot have been cast away, and have built her yourselves. If you have, you are wonderfully good shipwrights. And how came you to find out that I was here? or is this happy meeting the result of accident? Everything is so surprising that I feel perfectly bewildered."

"You shall know all, dear sir, in good time," I answered. "The story is too long to be told in a breath. Let us get inside, and come to an anchor; and as soon as we are sufficiently recovered from our present excitement to tell an intelligible tale, you shall know everything."

"Well, well, so be it," answered my father; "and I suppose I had better play pilot in navigating this 'seventy-four' of yours through the channel. What water do you draw?"

"Seven feet aft," I answered, "and she works to perfection; so you will have no difficulty with her."

"So much the better," answered my father, "as it will be rather ticklish work. Keep her well to windward, Robert; do not go closer than forty fathoms to the southern extremity of the surf.

And now, my dear boy, one word more. How is your sister?"

"Well; quite well, I am happy to say. At least, she was so when we left England, little more than four months ago," I answered; "and so was everybody else in whom we are interested."

"I am delighted beyond measure to hear it," returned my father; "this is *good* news, better than I could have dared to hope. Now keep her away, Robert. Starboard your helm—hard a-starboard; so, steady now as you go. Do you see the opening of the channel? Steer as straight as you like for it. This *will* be a surprise for Winter, indeed."

"He is still with you, then, dear sir?" said I. "I trust he is in good health."

"Yes, I am happy to say he is quite well," returned my father. "Indeed we have neither of us had a day's illness since we have been on the island. I was quite an invalid at the time that the ship was lost, certainly; but I soon recovered, thanks to Winter's care and good nursing. But how did you know of his being with me?"

"We learned your whole story, from the time

of your sailing for home up to the day of your being so shamefully abandoned," I replied, "and that by the merest accident. We happened to fall in with one of the men whom you shipped at Canton, on board a vessel which we boarded on the line, on our passage out. But here is some one with whom I must make you acquainted, dear sir," I continued, as Ella's fair head appeared at the companion.

I then introduced her to my father, briefly narrating the circumstances under which she became a member of our little crew, and frankly explaining the relation in which we now stood towards each other. When I had finished my explanation, my father took the dear little girl by the hand, kissed her on the forehead, and said a few kind words to relieve the embarrassment and agitation under which it was evident she was suffering ; and I had the very great satisfaction of seeing that these two beings, in whom I was so warmly interested, were mutually impressed very favourably towards each other.

We soon worked through the short passage in the reef, and then stood away to the westward,

rounding the southern extremity of the island very shortly afterwards. The moment that we cleared this point, and opened the western side of the island, Bob shouted, "Ah! there lies the dear old barkie, sure enough. Look at her, Harry, lad. She's sorely mauled about, poor old beauty, but I should still ha' knowed her anywheres, as far as these old eyes could see her."

There, indeed, lay the wreck of the *Amazon*, close to the beach, about two miles off, and sorely mauled about she was; so much so, that I greatly doubted whether Bob would ever have identified her as our old ship, had not my father's presence, and the story we had already heard of her loss, assisted him. Her three lower masts were still standing, but the whole of her upper works were gone, and I at first supposed that they had been used for fire-wood, until we opened up a tiny bay somewhat nearer us to the southward, and saw a small vessel in process of being built on the beach.

"You have established a ship-yard here, I see, sir," I remarked, as this object came in view.

"Yes," answered my father; "but we have

made but poor progress, so far. You will be of the greatest assistance to us, my dear boy—you and Robert here. Since you have managed to turn out such a sweet little craft as this cutter, I shall be strongly inclined to pull our work to pieces and begin all over again afresh.”

“How do you mean, sir?” I inquired. “You surely do not imagine that Bob and I built this cutter?”

“Did you not?” returned my father. “Then where did you pick her up?”

“She was built on the Thames,” I replied; “and Bob and I have managed to bring her out here between us.”

My father was greatly surprised at hearing this, but as we were now approaching the anchorage, it was decided to defer all explanations until we could have an opportunity of proceeding with them in a straightforward fashion. Sail was shortened, and in about ten minutes afterwards we dropped our anchor in a pretty little well-sheltered bay, within a couple of cables’ length of the beach, and in full view of a neat little cottage constructed of bamboo, which stood on a

lawn of about an acre in extent, environed with beautiful tropical trees and plants.

Winter was down on the beach full of curiosity respecting the new-comers, and I will leave to the reader's imagination the surprise and delight with which he recognised in them two of his old ship-mates.

The two canoes conveyed all hands of us ashore, and my father, after welcoming us heartily to "his dominions" as we stepped from the canoes to the beach, gave his arm to Ella, and with me on his other side, and Bob and Winter following arm-in-arm astern, and the two natives bringing up the rear, we at once wended our way to the cottage, where we found that Winter had prepared a sumptuous breakfast in anticipation of our arrival.

Whilst discussing this meal, I related, at my father's earnest solicitation, our whole story, commencing with an account of the wreck on Portland beach, and of the tale of the treasure-island told by the dying Spaniard, and then going on to relate how we had been induced, by a belief in this story, to build and fit out the *Water Lily*

and sail in her in search of the treasure, mentioning, in due course, our meeting with the seaman who had given us a clue to the *Amazon's* fate, and of our resolve, therefore, to search the whole Archipelago, if need be, for the abandoned ones; and winding up with an account of our late achievement of the destruction of the *Albatross*, and of the consequent imprisonment of her crew upon the island we had so recently sailed from.

Great was the surprise of my father and his companion as I proceeded, and frequent their comments and interruptions; but at last I got through with it, and then, of course, I became anxious, in my turn, to hear how matters had gone with my father and Winter during their long stay where they now were.

"I have very little to tell," replied my father, in answer to my questions; "and that little I should not now be alive to relate, but for the unceasing care and attention of my friend and comrade, Winter, here, who refused to save himself from a possible lifetime of captivity on this island by deserting his commander. He watched me all through a long and tedious illness, and, under

God, was the means of saving my life for this happy moment. We have never *quite* despaired of being restored to home and friends, but latterly we have felt that our deliverance might be the work of years. At first, we were kept buoyed up by the hope of being rescued by some passing vessel ; but, though we have maintained a ceaseless watch, we have never sighted a single sail from the moment of our first arrival here until you have in sight this morning. All my charts and instruments of every description were carried off when the mutineers left in the boats, so that I have but a very remote idea of our actual whereabouts, but we must be in a very out-of-the-way corner of the globe, as indeed I now gather clearly from what you have told me. Our first work, after my recovery, was the building of this hut : and then followed the preparation of a garden, a short distance inland from here, so that we might secure the means of existence. As soon as this was completed to our satisfaction, we went to work upon the building of a small vessel ; but our appliances were so inadequate to the task, that our progress has been excessively slow, as

you may judge when I tell you that we have been at work now fully two years, and the craft is yet barely half-finished. Latterly, indeed, we have got on somewhat better, for the two blacks—who, as far as I can learn from their signs and the few words of English they have picked up since being with us, were blown off their own island in a gale of wind, and came ashore here in the last stage of exhaustion—have been of the greatest assistance to us in the mere handling of heavy weights; and now that you have joined us, I think we may make short work of the remainder of the job.”

I was at first disposed to suggest the abandonment of the half-finished schooner (for such she was), but, on more mature consideration, I came to the conclusion that it would be better to finish her, on many accounts—the chief of which was that as we now mustered seven hands, all told, including the blacks, whom we could not leave behind, we should be uncomfortably crowded on board the cutter; and I doubted much whether we could find room to stow away, in so small a craft, a sufficiency of water, to say nothing of provisions for so large a party.

The day was, of course, declared a high holiday on the island ; and, after our mutual explanations had been fully given, we all—the whites, of course, that is—proceeded to the beach to inspect the craft on the stocks. She was a much larger craft than the *Lily*, measuring fully thirty tons. My father and Winter had given a great deal of care and attention to her design, and the result was a very pretty model, though her lines were by no means so fine as the cutter's. She was immensely strong, owing to the fact that it was less laborious to build in the timbers just as they were taken from the *Amazon*, or only with such alterations as were imperatively necessary to bring them to the required shape, than it would have been to reduce them with the imperfect tools in the possession of the builders. The whole of her framing was set up and secured, and the garboard and two adjacent streaks on each side bolted to : and that was all. I could easily understand, as I looked on her massive timbers, how great must have been the labour for two pair of hands to bring her even thus far forward ; and, in addition to this, there was the pulling of it all to pieces, in

the first instance, on board the parent ship, and the rafting of the materials down to the bay afterwards.

After taking a good look at the craft, we shoved off in the canoes for the wreck, calling on board the cutter on our way, that my father and Winter might satisfy the curiosity they felt concerning the little craft which had so successfully traversed so many thousand miles of ocean. They were, naturally, delighted at everything they saw, and admired her model greatly: but were, nevertheless, loud in their expressions of wonder at what they termed our temerity in venturing on so long a voyage in such a mere boat.

A quiet paddle of about half-an-hour took us alongside the wreck, which lay grounded in about ten feet of water, pretty much as she had been left by the mutineers. We had no difficulty in boarding, a substantial accommodation-ladder having been constructed to facilitate so frequent an operation. There was not much to see when we stood upon her deck—the whole of the poop having been removed to furnish materials for the schooner; but Bob and I naturally felt a deep interest in the ship which had formerly been our

floating home, and as to whose fate we had for so long been in a state of such painful uncertainty.

We remained on board about an hour, during which Ella insisted on having pointed out to her the exact spot which my old berth had formerly occupied ; and then we returned to the shore and visited the garden, which had been formed in a small natural clearing within about a quarter of a mile of the house. Here we found a goodly patch of wheat, almost ready for the sickle : a large plot of potatoes, which, my father said, grew but indifferently well in that climate ; a few other English vegetables, some yams, and several fruit-trees of various kinds, including the very useful bread-fruit, which had been carefully selected and as carefully transplanted to their present position, where they had flourished amazingly under the not very efficient gardening skill which had been bestowed upon them by the two recluses. Of animal food there was no lack, the small island being almost overrun by the many descendants of three pigs and half-a-dozen fowls, which the mutineers had, in an unaccountable paroxysm of generosity, left behind.

The remainder of the day was spent in a tour quite over my father's limited dominions, Bob and Winter having, however, devoted the afternoon to the rigging up of a couple of tents close alongside the hut, for the accommodation of us of the cutter's crew. During our ramble, which Ella shared—though she at first wished to remain aloof, thinking my father and I might have private matters to discuss after so long a separation—the subject of the treasure-island again came uppermost ; and my father seemed to be strongly of opinion that, in spite of our failure to find it, it really existed, and that our disappointment had arisen in some error as to its exact position. For my own part, I hardly knew what to think. I could not for a moment believe that the Spaniard, knowing himself to be a dying man, would tell a wanton and objectless falsehood ; and I had never supposed him to be otherwise than in the full possession of his senses whilst relating his story. But he had given the position of the island definitely, and, on our arrival at the latitude and longitude named, we had found no land at all. True, there had been a certain amount of reservation in his statement. He had

given the position "as near as he could ascertain it," or in words to that effect ; but, allowing the possibility of an error, that error was not likely to exceed a few miles, and I thought, that, had the island really existed, we ought to have been able, at all events, to see it from our mast-head when in the position ascribed to it.

We talked the matter over at some length—for no one is quite indifferent to the advantages accruing from the possession of wealth—but we could make nothing very satisfactory of it ; so at last the subject was changed, and we discussed and arranged our plan of immediate operations, my father's longing for home being a thousand times increased now that he knew we had sent information home of the possibility of his still being in existence. We all fully shared in his impatience, as I knew that Ada would soon begin to feel uneasy, if she were not already so, at the long period which had now elapsed since she could last have heard from or of us. As for Winter, he was a Portland man, and the stories Bob told him of his kith and kin fully aroused his semi-dormant longings to see them all once more.

The next morning, we all turned to with a will upon the schooner. It happened that more materials were required from the wreck ; and the obtaining of these, and the rafting of them down to the shipyard, had hitherto been a work involving the expenditure of much time and great labour, as, until the arrival of the two blacks in their canoe about six months before, my father had nothing in the shape of a boat, excepting a rude catamaran sort of an affair ; and after the acquisition of the canoe, though she was, of course, most useful for many purposes, the rafting down of the timbers and planking was almost as tedious and laborious an operation as ever, the canoe being too small and too light for towing purposes, and their usual mode of procedure had been to kedge down everything.

But our arrival put an entirely new phase upon this part of the business. We got out our tube-boat, and put her together and rigged her ; and then we six men—four whites and the two natives, who were strong, active lads—manned her and the cutter, and proceeded to the wreck, where we combined our forces in taking apart such por-

tions of the wreck as we thought most suitable for our purpose.

By the middle of the afternoon two good-sized rafts were in the water, and the *Lily* taking one of these in tow, and the tube-boat (which Bob insisted on christening as the *Ella*) the other, we got the whole down to the bay and moored to the beach in little more than an hour—a task which, my father declared had usually occupied him and Winter the best part of a day, and even then the amount of material transported had scarcely been a quarter as great as that now brought down. So great, indeed, had been the additional assistance afforded by the two pairs of strong arms belonging to the cutter's crew, that we considered we now had a sufficiency of material to plank the schooner right up to her gunwale.

I do not know whether I have mentioned it before or not, but, in fitting out the *Water Lily*, I had provided a very complete chest of carpenter's tools, so that we might have the means of effecting any necessary repairs to the cutter, as far as our skill would allow; and these now came into play with excellent effect.

We all worked in high spirits, for it was now no longer a doubtful question as to whether the schooner could be finished or not, the additional strength contributed by Bob and myself being found just sufficient to render manageable, and comparatively easy, work which had before proved too heavy for my father and Winter alone, or even when aided by the two natives. These, I may as well now mention, were two lads of about eighteen years of age, and, having been treated very kindly from their first arrival by my father, proved very tractable and willing, and altogether very valuable aids in many respects.

We were none of us very skilful in the handling of tools, and our work was, consequently, of no very highly finished character ; but everything was as strong as wood and iron could make it, and within a fortnight we had contrived, by dint of sheer hard work, to get the schooner planked right up.

At first we had a great deal of difficulty with our fastenings, from want of a smith or a smith's forge ; and this had been the greatest bar to my father's progress. Ella was the means of helping us out of this difficulty, by suggesting an idea

which I think would never have occurred to any of us men. This was neither more nor less than the construction of a rude but efficient smith's hearth out of some old sheet and pig iron obtained from the wreck, and the manufacture of a bellows from some boards and stout tarpaulin, the nozzle being made of bamboo, and inserted into an orifice in the hearth which was packed air-tight with clay. It was a clumsy contrivance certainly, but it answered our purpose well enough to save us a great deal of time and labour.

The laying of the deck was our next task ; and it took us another fortnight to do this, as we resolved that everything should be as well done as possible. This was exclusive of the time occupied in fixing the combings of the hatch and fore-scuttle, cabin-companion, skylight, and other openings. As we "got our hands in," however, we made more rapid progress ; and, in little more than two months from the date of the *Water Lily's* arrival, the hull of the schooner was completed and in readiness for the reception of her spars. These we got out of the spars of the wreck, all of which had been sent down long be-

fore by my father and Winter, and carefully stored up for this very purpose.

Another month saw these spars all shaped and fitted, and ready to be put into their places. This had been the work of my father and myself, aided in the lifting, turning over, and shifting generally by the natives, Bob and Winter busying themselves meanwhile in the manufacture of a suit of sails from those belonging to the *Amazon*. Our rigging was not very trustworthy, being manufactured, for the most part, out of the old rigging of the wreck ; but there had been a good supply of new rope also on board, as a stand-by, and this we had used in, as far as it would go, in the most important parts.

We decided to rig the craft complete upon the stocks, and then launch her, and tow her down alongside the wreck, to take in ballast, and her water-tanks, stores, etc. This we accordingly did, finishing off everything, even to the bending of the sails ; and four months to a day after the *Water Lily's* arrival saw her caulked, her seams paid, her hull painted, and, in short, everything ready, even to wedging up, for launching.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TREASURE.

THIS eventful day, it was unanimously agreed, should be observed as a strict holiday, no work except what was absolutely necessary beyond the launch being permissible. Every preparation had been completed the day before, all of us having worked like galley-slaves to achieve this result, as soon as it became apparent that launching on this day might be possible.

The morning dawned fair and serene, the sky was without a cloud, each quivering leaf and blade of grass glittered with diamond-like dew-drops, and the air was laden with the perfume of numberless flowers. Nature appeared in fact to have arrayed herself in gala attire, in honour of the

occasion. Bob and Winter were up by daybreak to dress the schooner out with the flags of the old *Amazon*, in addition to a bran-new burgee—red, with a white border, and the name *Ada*, after my sister, in white letters—which floated gallantly in the breeze from the main-topmast-head, and which, I need scarcely inform the sagacious reader, was the work of Ella's skilful fingers. The cutter's flags were equally divided between her and the tube-boat, both craft being moored a short distance apart in the little bay. Our gun, which had never been dismounted from the time of the fight with the pirate's boats, was loaded with a blank cartridge, well rammed down, and the muzzle plentifully greased to create a louder report, so that the schooner might be honoured with a salute as she took the water; and one of the blacks was stationed on board the *Water Lily*, with instructions to pull the trigger-line directly he saw the schooner fairly in motion on the ways. A bottle of wine was also slung from the schooner's stem, that the ceremony of christening might not be shorn of its usual rite.

This occupied the two mates until breakfast was

ready, when we all sat down to the meal in most exuberant spirits. As soon as it was over we all proceeded to the beach, and Bob climbed on board the craft, and took his station forward, in readiness to let go the anchor as soon as she had slid far enough off from the land. Ella took up a position under the bows, supported by my father, who instructed her how to perform the ceremony of christening after the most approved fashion, whilst Winter and I stood by to knock away the spurshores, and the second native launched and jumped into a canoe, to go alongside and fetch Bob ashore, as soon as his share of the duty was performed.

When we had all taken our stations—

“Is everybody ready?” inquired my father.

A general “Ay, ay,” was the response. Ella took the bottle of wine in her hand, and Winter and I poised our hammers.

“Then knock away with a will, lads!” exclaimed the skipper.

A few lusty strokes brought the shores down, the schooner began to move, and Ella dashed the bottle against the craft’s bows, exclaiming in a

clear, silvery voice, as the wine dripped from the stem :

“ God bless the *Ada*, and send her success and prosperity !”

We all took off our hats and cheered lustily as the schooner rushed down the ways and plunged stern foremost into the sparkling sea ; the gun went off with a sharp *bang*, and the native gunner instantly, with a terrific yell, sprang over the side of the cutter, and struck out for the shore with all the vigour and activity that fear could impart to his movements.

The schooner clove the water smoothly and easily as she drove astern when once fairly afloat, and held her way long enough to shoot far beyond her consorts at anchor in the bay. As soon as her speed was sufficiently reduced, Bob let go his anchor, and we had the satisfaction of seeing that she floated lightly and on a perfectly even keel.

As soon as Bob came on shore, he, of course, joined us, and lent his aid in admiring and praising our own handiwork, as is pretty generally the custom with all mortals, though some are not so ingenuous in the exhibition of their actual feelings

as we were. And I think we had very good reason for our admiration, for the craft was more than sightly, she was decidedly handsome, and we who had put her together were, after all, it must be remembered, only unskilled amateurs; and though I think I may, without undue vanity, say that we were all prime seamen, and knew perfectly well what constituted a handsome and whole-some craft, it is one thing to know this, and quite another to make your work correspond accurately with your ideas.

When we had admired the schooner to our hearts' content, my father wished to know whether any one had any proposal to make as to the manner in which the remainder of the day should be spent. It appeared, from the general silence which ensued that no one had; but on glancing at Ella, who remained beside him, I noticed an eager look in her face, as though she would like to speak, but was restrained by a feeling of timidity.

"What is it, Ella?" inquired I.

"If no one has anything better to propose," she replied, "I think a picnic would be very nice; and I would suggest that the natives be sent on

by land, with everything necessary, to the northern end of the island, opposite the poor old *Amazon*, of which we are so soon to see the last, and that the rest of us take Harry's tube-boat, and sail in her quite round the island—which we new-comers have not seen very much of as yet—and stop at the point I have named."

This, of course, we all cordially agreed to, though I could scarcely help smiling furtively at the idea of a picnic, when our lives had been a sort of continuous picnic affair ever since we had been on the island, though, it is true, our pastime had consisted principally of pretty hard work.

However, I made no remark, and we all returned to the house, and proceeded to pack up the necessary viands, etc., and to start the "niggers," as Bob invariably termed our black aids, in the proposed direction.

When everything was ready, however, it was found that there was more than we had the conscience to ask the poor fellows to carry, willing as they were; so Ella's programme was so far departed from as to send them by water in a canoe, instead of by land; and as soon as they were fairly

away, we shoved off in the cutter's canoe, got on board the tube-boat, hauled up her grapnel, and made sail to the southward.

Here another departure from the programme took place, for my father was curious to see how so singular a craft behaved in open water : so, as there was a nice fresh breeze blowing, and sufficient sea on outside to give him a fair idea of her qualities, we worked out through the channel as soon as we reached it, and sailed round the island *outside* of everything first of all, resuming the original plan as soon as we came inside again.

Both my father and Winter were much struck with the smooth and easy motion with which she took the seas, especially when going close-hauled to windward, the short, choppy head-sea which the breeze had knocked up having not the slightest perceptible retarding effect upon the sharp, gently-swelling tubes, which pierced the combing seas absolutely without any shock whatever ; whereas a boat of the usual mould would have pitched and jerked into them, and half-blinded us and wholly wet us through with spray. And they were quite as much surprised at her stiffness, for her amount

of heel was barely perceptible, though we were driving her through it under whole canvas ; whilst had we been in the *Water Lily*, with a proportionate amount of sail set, she would, stiff as she was, have been lying down gunwale under.

So rapidly did she skim along over the water too, that, notwithstanding the extra distance traversed beyond that originally proposed, we were in ample time for the meal—luncheon or dinner, whichever we chose to call it—which it was arranged we should partake of picnic fashion in the open air.

I was delighted to observe that both my father and Winter keenly enjoyed this short cruise outside. It was the first time, excepting when my father came out to meet us and pilot us in, that either of them had been outside the reef ; and that they were now fairly at sea, and with a staunch and good sea-boat under their feet, seemed an earnest of their easy escape almost more convincing than the fact that the vessel in which that escape was planned to be made was now actually in the water.

Having made the tour of the island both out-

side and inside the reef, and admired its many beauties, we at length sat down to our meal in high spirits, and with appetites which enabled us to do the most ample justice to Ella's bounteous provision, which, it now appeared, had been in progress the whole of the previous day, in anticipation of some such arrangement as that which she had proposed.

I had noticed an unusual flutter in the dear little girl's manner more than once during the morning, as well as considerable imperfectly repressed excitement ; but I had said nothing to her about it, attributing it to that which had produced so much excitement of feeling among the rest of us, namely, the important event of the launch. This feeling of excitement still continued to animate us ; but, strangely enough, Ella seemed the least able of the party to control it, and it appeared to have the effect of agitating her nerves considerably. Moreover, she seemed to be singularly pre-occupied over something, answering remarks at random—sometimes when she was not addressed at all—and then flushing up and apologising confusedly.

When our meal was over, a few bottles from a small stock of carefully-hoarded wine, from the *Amazon's* stores, were produced, and at Ella's especial request, we four men proceeded to regale ourselves, and assist digestion with "the fragrant weed." The chief topic of conversation was, of course, the arrangements to be made for a speedy departure from the island. It was decided that on the following day all hands should employ themselves in getting the schooner ballasted, provisioned and watered, and it was thought that, by hard work, all might be done in readiness for a departure at daybreak on the succeeding morning. My father, Winter, and the two blacks, were to man the schooner, whilst Ella, Bob, and myself, were to continue in the cutter, and it was, of course, a settled thing that we were to keep company as long as it was possible. We also decided upon certain rendezvous in case of being compelled, by bad weather, to part company at any particular part of the voyage. These rendezvous, I may as well mention, were Melbourne, Cape Town, St. Helena, St. Antonio in the Cape de Verd Group, and Madeira.

When this topic seemed pretty well exhausted, Ella remarked nervously, "It seems then, Harry, that you have quite given up the idea of making any further search for the treasure-island. I have not heard it mentioned once for—oh! ever so long."

"I fear we must think no more of that," I replied. "When the story was first told to me, it seemed an easy matter to sail direct to the spot, but the fact that some mistake has occurred somewhere with regard to its position, has quite thrown us out, and to look for it among the numerous islands which constitute this archipelago would be somewhat like searching for a needle in a bundle of hay, and the chances of finding either the one or the other would be about equal, I should say. If I only held a sufficient clue to warrant the slightest hope of success, I would willingly prosecute a search, but I do not."

"Are you *quite* sure that you do not?" she returned, still very nervously. "Tell us the story all over again; perhaps some useful idea may suggest itself to one or other of us, if it is all gone carefully over once more."

“Certainly I will,” said I, “if it be only to gratify you, little one; I anticipate no further result. You must know, then, Ella and gentlemen, that the Spaniard who told me this story was on his death-bed when he confided it to me. He asserted that a treasure-ship lay buried in the sandy beach of a certain island here in the Pacific, and he not only gave me the latitude and longitude of the island, but he minutely described it, so that I might recognise it at once, and he also described certain marks whereby I might be able to fix upon the exact spot in the beach where the buried treasure-ship lay.”

“And I suppose you have fixed upon your mind a kind of mental picture of this island, drawn from the description given you,” said Ella; “and I presume you are of opinion that you would recognise the island in a moment, if you saw it?”

“Exactly so,” I answered. “I can see it before me at this moment”—shutting my eyes—“as distinctly as possible. There it lies, about three miles away, with the surf beating all round it; and there, in bold relief against the clear blue sky, stands the isolated clump of seven cocoa-nut

trees on the extreme northernmost point of the island."

"Somewhat like these that we are sitting under at this moment?" interrupted Ella excitedly.

"Ye—es," said I, "certainly; somewhat like these. It is curious now, but I never noticed until this moment that these trees are seven in number. If, now, any two of them were *marked* in any way——"

"Somewhat like this?" again interrupted Ella, as she started to her feet and placed her hand upon a very perceptible scar in the trunk of the central tree.

We sprang to our feet as one man, infinitely more excited even than Ella was, and walked up to the tree and carefully examined the mark. There was no mistake about it, the bark had been deeply cut away with a knife, and I cannot, for the life of me, say how it was that it had never attracted my attention, unless it be that the wound was now weather-stained, and by no means so conspicuous as I had pictured it in my mind; perhaps it was in a great measure due, too, to the fact that the island we were on, though answering

accurately to the description given of the treasure-island, was quite unlike the picture my imagination had conjured up.

“Now for the other mark,” I exclaimed, “it is on one or other of the remaining six trees, if this really be——”

“Here it is,” again exclaimed Ella, darting to a tree which stood on the edge of the clump, and again pointing out a mark very similar to the first.

Of the nature of this mark, too, there could be no possible doubt. I seized a half-consumed stick from the embers of the expiring fire: and, getting the two marked trees in line, I walked away from them, keeping them in one, until I saw just clear of the trees and bushes on the southern extremity of the island, a small pinnacle of uncovered rock peering blackly out from among the snowy glittering surf. I then drove the stick I held in my hand deep into the sandy beach, exclaiming,

“Here lies the buried treasure-ship, if there be any truth in the story.”

“We’ll soon set that question at rest,” exclaimed

Bob. "Here, you two niggers, jump into this here canoe and paddle me down to the cutter as quick as you knows how. I'm off a'ter they shovels as we laid in for this here very job," he explained, turning to me, "and I'll be back ag'in in next to no time."

Whilst he was gone, I sought and obtained an explanation from Ella of the manner in which she had made this most important discovery. It seemed that she had amused herself by wandering pretty nearly all over the island, whilst we were hard at work upon the schooner, and in one of her rambles her attention had been attracted to this very clump of trees. Their number had impressed itself upon her, and, endeavouring to remember what it was she had heard or dreamed connected with seven cocoa-nut trees, the story of the treasure had suddenly flashed across her mind. This led, of course, to an examination of the trees and the discovery of the marks upon them, on the day but one preceding the launch of the schooner; and, seeing that we were disposed to make the launching day a gala day, she decided to keep her own counsel until the arrival of the day itself, and to

let the revelation of the discovery be made at such a time as still further to increase our reasons for rejoicing. And upon this resolution had been based her plot for the pic-nic.

“I am so delighted, Harry, dear,” she added in conclusion, “that it is I who have made this discovery : you cannot think what a pleasure it is to a woman to contribute to the happiness and prosperity of the man she loves. And, beside this, there is the satisfaction of knowing that, if the wealth you have spoken of really lies buried here, and I have no doubt whatever that it does, you will now be under no necessity for following up a profession which must inevitably have involved long separations from me. I am so happy, dearest, for I do not think I could have endured that.”

I was deeply affected by this and frequent other evidences of the warmth and strength of Ella's attachment to me, and of the confiding frankness with which she revealed it ; and I believe most conscientiously that the greatest gratification I derived from the discovery of the treasure arose from a knowledge of the extended power it would bestow upon me to contribute to her happiness.

Bob soon returned with a couple of shovels, and, springing ashore from the canoe, he handed one to Winter, and began at once to ply the other most vigorously himself, exclaiming as he did so,

“There you are, my lad : now fire away as hard as you like. There’s only a few feet of sand between us and gold enough to make all our fortin’s a dozen times over, so let’s rouse it up and have a look at it, without any more words.”

The two men worked with a will, and soon stood in a good-sized hole, about three feet deep, whilst the rest of us looked on at their labours with the keenest interest. At length Winter’s shovel struck upon something hard, and he announced the fact with a joyous shout. Bob, however, still continued working away without meeting with any resistance. A few more strokes of Winter’s shovel laid bare a small patch of damp discoloured planking, a further proof, if we needed one, of the truth of the story. Bob was still digging away as hard as ever. Presently he ceased digging, and began shovelling the loose sand off a piece of the deck or something else

which he had got down to. This was soon uncovered, and we then saw that it was a piece of *loose* plank, which he and Winter succeeded between them in raising, and underneath it lay a dark, hollow cavity. To work they both went once more, and in a short time three more loose planks were so far uncovered as to permit of their being removed.

This accomplished, it was found that we had been so fortunate as to hit, at the first trial, upon the hole through which the Spaniard had penetrated to the innermost recesses of the ship. A great deal of sand still remained to be cleared away, however, before we could get at the gold ; and my father and I were on the point of relieving the two mates, when the natives, who had looked on at the operations with a great deal of interest and intelligence, stepped forward, and said, “ No, no ; now me work.” And though they had probably never seen shovels in their lives before, and were a little awkward at first in the handling of them, they soon got into the swing of it, and did their work as well as either of the others. And so they kept on, spell and spell, the mates and the

"niggers," neither party seeming willing that my father or I should share in the hard work ; and in about an hour and a half, Bob's shovel suddenly struck sharply upon something harder than wood. He and Winter were both working under the influence of powerful excitement, so it was not long before they had cleared away the sand sufficiently to enable them to lay hold of and drag forth an ingot, black and discoloured almost as rusty iron, but heavy enough to prove most satisfactorily that it was not that metal. It was handed up, and I at once proceeded to scrape away with my strong clasp knife upon its surface, quickly establishing the fact that it was indeed the precious metal.

This I considered sufficient for one day, especially as it had been agreed that it should be a holiday. So, with considerable difficulty, I at length persuaded the two mates to come out of their hole, and rest after their violent exertions ; and shortly afterwards our goods and chattels were packed up and put on board one of the canoes, in charge of the two natives, and the remainder of the party embarked in the tube-boat with the gold—thirteen ingots in all—that had been brought to

light, the sails were hoisted, and we ran down to the anchorage in the bay with both canoes in tow.

It would be difficult to express the satisfaction which all felt at this important discovery, but to Bob and me the satisfaction was peculiarly great, for we had now accomplished all that our most sanguine expectations had led us to hope for in projecting this adventurous voyage—more, indeed; for, as the reader is aware, when the subject was first mooted we had no hope of finding my father, having quite given him up as dead.

The next day saw us hard at work again, and, not to dwell too long upon matters which may be passed over briefly, in three days we had the box of gems, and as much gold as we considered we could take. The schooner was ballasted with it, taking in, as nearly as we could calculate, twenty tons, and the precious metal was also substituted for the lead ballast of the cutter. The aperture in the deck of the buried ship was then carefully boarded over as before, the sand shovelled back into its place, and to time and the winds were left the work of completely eradicating all remaining traces of our labours. Both craft were then fully

provisioned and watered, abundant preparation having already been made, and on the morning following the completion of our final arrangements, both craft made sail from the island, the *Ada* leading out through the channel, and stood away to the southward and westward under every stitch of canvas that would draw. We soon found, however, that in moderate weather the *Water Lily* could sail round and round the *Ada*, and we had to take in our topsail and haul down a reef in our mainsail to avoid running away from her altogether; it was only when it came to double-reefed canvas that her superior power told sufficiently to produce an equality in our speeds. It seemed as though everything which we were to meet with in the shape of adventure had befallen us on the first half of our voyage, for day after day passed by without anything to distinguish it from the others, and after a quick and pleasant run, we reached Melbourne just in time to catch the homeward-bound mail, and to send a hurried letter to my sister, acquainting her with the agreeable intelligence of our double success. I here had an opportunity of acquainting the proper authorities

with all the circumstances connected with the destruction of the pirate brig, and of the crew being imprisoned on the island, and I afterwards learned that a cruiser had been despatched to the spot, and that the entire band were captured, tried, condemned upon a mass of evidence, which was soon collected against them, and hanged.

Here also I had the happiness of being united to the dear girl who had in so many ways proved herself worthy of my best and strongest love, and as our story—excepting that part of it which related to the finding of the treasure—had got wind, the sympathy and kind feeling shewn towards us by the warm-hearted colonists, was such as to convert our wedding-day almost into a day of public rejoicing. All the ships, without exception, were dressed with flags, and there was a long article in one of the local papers headed, “Thrilling Romance of the Sea,” in which the story of Ella’s rescue from the wreck told with great affect.

We remained at Melbourne about a week, and then made sail once more, still with favourable winds and fine weather, until we reached the Cape of Good Hope—which we did in little more than a

month—when we encountered a very strong breeze from the southward and eastward, from which we were glad enough to take shelter behind the fine breakwater in the Bay. Here we again filled up provisions and water, and once more despatched letters home.

By the time that we had done what we wanted, the gale was over, and we lost no time in making a fresh start. We soon got into the south-east trades, and, as they happened to be blowing strong, we made the best of them, and did not attempt to stop at St. Helena. We were fortunate again in crossing the line, getting a little slant of wind, which carried us handsomely across the usually calm belt which so tries the patience of the homeward-bound seaman at that spot; and after a remarkably fine passage of thirty-nine days from Table Bay, we found ourselves at anchor in Funchal Roads.

One of the canoes (both of which the schooner carried on deck) was got out, and my father and I went ashore to the post-office, where we found, as we expected, letters from my sister in answer to ours from Melbourne. My poor father was com-

pletely unmanned by the warmth of affection breathed forth in my sister's letter to him, and I was scarcely less so at the delight she manifested at our safety and success, and the warm sympathy with which she responded to the timid message my letter had conveyed to her from her unknown sister.

We hurriedly got in a stock of wine, and once more made sail, and after a baffling passage of a fortnight, against head-winds and light airs and calms, reached Weymouth Bay on a most lovely evening in the last week of June, having accomplished our voyage round the world, with all its delays, in somewhat under eleven months.

The moment that we were at anchor one of the canoes was got into the water, and my father, Ella, and I were paddled ashore by the two natives (who could now speak English tolerably well, and had accustomed themselves to the use of civilised clothing), Bob and Winter remaining on board their respective craft that night to take care of them.

We landed at the flight of steps at the pier-end, and made the best of our way at once to my aunt's

house. My sister was there, eagerly expecting us ; for it appeared that she had been on the Esplanade listening to the strains of the regimental band, and had recognised the *Water Lily* as we drew in towards the anchorage.

I will pass over in silence the rapturous meeting which ensued, for the feelings of all were of too deep and sacred a character for so inexperienced a pen as mine to deal with. Suffice it to say that we all enjoyed on that evening one of those short seasons of perfect, unalloyed happiness which are occasionally permitted even here on earth.

Little now remains to be told. We succeeded, after a vast amount of hard work and difficulty, in turning our gold into cash : and the proceeds were equally divided among us five whites ; the result being, as I suppose, I need hardly say, a magnificent fortune to each. Winter, like the honest fellow that he was, immediately married the girl who had consented to share his uncertain fortune as a seaman : and the two blacks attached themselves, as a matter of course, to my father's establishment. As for Bob, he asserted roundly that his gold would be

of no use or value to him if I “turned him adrift,” so he became, I need scarcely say with my hearty good-will, a fixture in my establishment ; and his whole thoughts are now set on being made sailing-master of a fine schooner yacht which is building for me.

I found out Ella’s relations, and communicated the fact of her rescue from the wreck, and of her having become my wife ; but I said nothing respecting our immense wealth, merely stating that I was possessed of a comfortable independency, as I wished to ascertain whether they were willing to receive her as a relative, on her own and her mother’s account. I regret, for the sake of human nature, to say that the interview was eminently unsatisfactory ; and I left their house with a mental resolve that my wife should never, with my consent, enter the doors of such unnatural relatives.

THE END.

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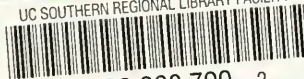
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